

# THE SOUL OF YUGOSLAVIA

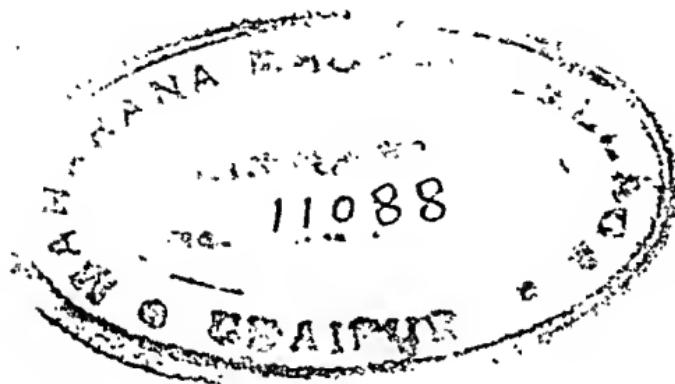
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THE SOUL OF  
YUGOSLAVIA

BY  
H. D. HARRISON

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## *The spelling and pronunciation of Yugoslav names*

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WHETHER it is written in Cyrillic or in Latin letters the Serbo-Croatian language uses some half a dozen letters which English has not got and is purely phonetic. This makes the rendering of Yugoslav names into English very difficult.

If the Croatian Latin spelling is given I find to my surprise that even the name of the country—Jugoslavia—is pronounced in English as Djugo-Slavia. Therefore I have adopted a more or less phonetic spelling throughout this book. Thus Cincar Marković (I cannot imagine how the English reader would pronounce it) has become Tzintzar Markovitch, which looks awkward but ensures the correct pronunciation of the name.

“ J ” which is pronounced in Serbo-Croat as “ Y ” has been replaced by that letter throughout. Only the double-rolled “ R ” which is used as a vowel has defied proper rendering. The word for Serb is Srb, but the long rolled “ R ” sounds rather like the English “ E ” which we have inserted.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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I AM indebted for much of the material about the Patriots' Revolt to the brilliant dispatches of my good friend John Segre, *New Chronicle* Special Correspondent in South East Europe, who fell into the hands of the Germans when Yugoslavia was occupied.

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# REVOLT IN THE NIGHT

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## CHAPTER ONE

### REVOLT IN THE NIGHT

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It was the night of March 26th and the streets of Belgrade were full of sullen, angry people. That morning the Premier Tzvetkovitch and Foreign Minister Tzintzar Markovitch had returned secretly from Vienna where they had signed away the honour and liberty of their people. They had not dared to return openly to the capital, but had slipped from the train at a tiny station up the line and driven in heavily guarded cars to see the Prince Regent and tell him that his orders had been carried out.

All day the students had been demonstrating. Time and again the gendarmes, moving in twos and carrying rifles with fixed bayonets, had broken up the student groups. Time and again they had reformed, and the sullen cries of "Down with the Traitors!" broke out again. How often in the tragic history of this turbulent city, perched on low hills where the mighty Rivers Sava and Danube meet, have such student demonstrations foreboded

ill for governments or rulers who heeded not the will of the Serbian people. So had the students protested in 1903 in the stormy days which preceded the death of Alexander Obrenovitch and his wife Draga, who had tried to sell their country to Austria. So had they forced a dictatorial government in 1918 to drop the Concordat which would have put them under the cultural yoke of Italy. For in Serbia the voice of the students echoes the voice of the people and woe to the ruler, however dictatorial, who refuses for too long to heed their will.

Night fell, but the tension still remained. Little groups of officers moved quietly through the darkness to their appointed stations. The time for action came. Forty young air force officers surrounded the villa of the Premier. Without effort they overcame the guard and forced an entrance. Their leader, Captain Rakotchevitch, woke the Prime Minister. He sat up in bed, a hair net over his greying black hair, his swarthy face pale under its tan. "Follow me, please," the officer ordered. "By what right do you order me? I shall certainly not obey," said the Premier shakily. "Come on, or I fire," said the officer, drawing his revolver. Almost swooning the Premier dressed and went.

By this time Belgrade was almost entirely in the hands of the "patriots." Their plans had been carefully laid. The post office, telephone and

telegraph offices, all government buildings, the police headquarters and other important points were occupied by groups of young air force officers. All the ministers of the Tzvetkovitch government were under arrest. As each group completed its work it reported to General Dushan Simovitch at the War Office. "We have done the allotted task."

When all reports had been received General Simovitch jumped into his staff car and drove swiftly out of town to the new palace on the hill at Dedinje, where the boy-king Peter slept beneath a huge portrait of his murdered father, in the room his father used to occupy. "Wake the King!" he ordered. The Palace servants expostulated. They were a little frightened. Not one of them but knew by heart the story of how one night in May, 1903, another Belgrade Palace Guard had been ordered to wake their King. But the General insisted.

Young King Peter, his tall, athletic figure swathed in a dressing-gown, his eyes heavy with sleep, came to the room where the General was waiting.

"Your Majesty, from now on you are King of Yugoslavia, and exercising full sovereign powers," said the General, saluting, and then shaking the King vigorously by the hand. With the same calm dignity with which as a small boy fresh from school in England he had accepted the high office thrust upon him so suddenly by the tragic events of

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Marseilles, where his father was murdered, seventeen-year-old King Peter accepted now responsibility which would have broken the courage of many an older man—responsibility for a tiny people threatened by the greatest and most brutal military force the world has ever seen, responsibility to lead the resistance of a people misled by years of timid appeasement.

A revolution had been accomplished. A brave people had "found their soul." A great and powerful bully, sure of the quiet acquiescence of a small victim, had suddenly been confronted with indignant refusal to accept his shameless demands. When the full history of this war comes to be written, it may well be that the events of March 28th, 1941, in Belgrade, will mark a turning point in the whole war.

Prince Paul, who as Chief Regent, had taken upon himself dictatorial powers almost as complete as those formerly enjoyed by his cousin, King Alexander, had left the night before for his estate in Slovenia. He did not take at all seriously the students' demonstrations and all the many signs of popular discontent with the policy of his Ministers. He never did allow public opinion to influence his policy and he relied always for his information on what his people were thinking and feeling upon his police and palace officials.

Having received the report of Tzvetkovitch and



Tzintzar Markovitch on the signing of the Tripartite Pact in Vienna he settled himself comfortably to sleep in the royal train. At Kutina the inspector on the train was called to the telephone by an official of the State Railways and informed of the *coup d'état* carried out by General Simovitch and his air force officers. He added that tanks and troops filled the streets. The inspector rushed back to the train and asked the Prince's aide-de-camp to tell him what had happened.

With some persuasion the aide-de-camp agreed to awaken the Prince, who refused, however, to take the news seriously and was angry at being disturbed. He was sure the whole thing was a joke, as otherwise the Prime Minister would have informed him. Even at Zagreb, hours later, the Prince again refused to believe the news of what had happened, as he was sure that either the young King or the palace officials would have let him know. Then, dramatically, a telegram arrived from Belgrade ordering that the royal train should return immediately.

Prince Paul tried to assert his authority and ordered Dr. Matchek, the Croatian leader, and Dr. Subashitch, Governor of Croatia, to meet him at the Bretzitze station. But General Nedelkovitch, Commander of the forces in Zagreb, arrived first at the station and insisted on seeing the Prince. "As Commander of the army in Zagreb, according to information just

received, I have to tell you His Majesty King Peter the Second has assumed royal powers. The Regents have handed in their resignations and it is my duty to inform you that you must return to Belgrade at once," he said.

After futile attempts to get through by telephone to the King or Princess Olga, his wife, the Prince returned to the train. Early in the evening the royal train reached Belgrade. The Prince went at once to the Ministry of War where he was informed that he could leave at once for Athens. Late that night he and his family took train for the Greek capital.

On taking up his new duties the young King Peter broadcast a message to the nation. In strong, firm tones he said " Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, at this moment so grave in the history of our people, I have decided to take the royal power into my own hands.

" The members of the Regency Council appreciated the correctness of the reasons for my action and immediately resigned of their own accord.

" My loyal Army and Navy have at once placed themselves at my disposal and are already carrying out my orders. I appeal to all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to rally round the Throne. Under the present grave circumstances, this is the surest way of preserving internal order and external peace.

" I have charged Army Corps General Dushan Simovitch with the formation of a new Government

With trust in God and the future of Yugoslavia, I appeal to all citizens and all authorities of the country to fulfil their duties to King and country."

The joy of the people of Belgrade and of the whole country knew no bounds when they heard of the change of government. When King Peter rode slowly through the streets of the city alone in an open car—a thing which few Balkan rulers have dared to do—he was greeted on all sides as a deliverer of the people from the bondage of slavery and the infamy of treason. All day long in the chief cities of the whole land the people showed by song and dance how happy they were to have escaped the trap which a cunning enemy had laid for them and into which a Quisling Government had so nearly led them. The rejoicings were broadcast in a glorious sort of "In Town To-night." We listened in London to the glad music of the "kolos"—the Yugoslav national dances—to the scraping of many dancing feet, the cries of the dancers, the happy laughter of young and old, the catching stanzas of epic songs. We did not guess that within a few days this virile, young capital would be a shambles, many of the gay dancers, women, children and old men, lying dead upon its deserted streets, victims of the most ruthless brutality which even the war-wracked Balkans have ever known.

The new Government was justly popular. Except

for the absolutely pro-Axis groups, small and unpopular anyway, it represented every section of public opinion, every corner of the country.

General Simovitch chose rather to create a national government of political leaders than to form a military dictatorship. Among his ministers are many who though highly popular had been out of office for over a decade because they had dared to oppose dictatorship—even the comparatively mild and benevolent dictatorship of the popular King Alexander himself. As a result of over fourteen years political reporting in the Balkans I knew almost every one of them personally. Some had been my close personal friends.

General Simovitch, whom I had last met on the Zemun aerodrome when he thanked me for what he called my "fearless recording" of the events which accompanied Stoyadinovitch's attempts to force an unwanted Concordat on an angry people, is typical of the upright, courageous men of which his cabinet was formed. He fought throughout all the Balkan Wars, right through the World War, and finally became Chief of Air Staff in 1918. It was he who built up the Yugoslav air force as far as the limited means of his country and the blank refusal of credits by Britain and France for armaments would allow. He tried hard to secure a powerful striking force of British fighters, but an ill-advised British govern-

ment refused all offers of payment in Yugoslav produce and, as payment in cash was impossible, turned down orders which would have expanded our factories and decreased our unemployment. Even so he remained strongly pro-British and French. A cultured, determined man, a fine soldier and beloved by his men, Simovitch retained an independent judgment on national and international political events which made him the natural leader of a movement to emancipate his land from foreign domination.

It was a stroke of genius to get Dr. Matchek, the staunch democrat leader of the mass of the Croatian peasants, who put off the black coat of the lawyer and donned the home-spun garments of the peasant when he succeeded Stjepan Raditch in that office, to become one of his vice-premiers. Knowing the dauntless democracy of Matchek, who once told me that if no agreement were possible with the Serbs he hoped they would go with the Axis powers in case of war so that the Croats could then fight on the side of the French and British, I did not believe the German-spread stories that it was he who had wanted the signing of the Tripartite Pact. His acceptance of office under Simovitch as soon as guarantees of the continuance of Croatian autonomy had been given, and his call to every Croatian man to obey the summons to the colours, proved his loyalty.

The choice of Professor Yovanovitch, the leading

authority on Yugoslav constitutional law, as second vice premier was also excellent. Dr Yovanovitch is respected throughout the whole land for his uprightness and his courage. Called in by King Alexander on the eve of his dictatorship to give his opinion on certain constitutional aspects of the situation he steadfastly insisted that the changes proposed were unconstitutional. Despite his constant opposition he retained the King's profound respect and was always consulted on important legal matters even though his advice was not taken. He was one of the first of the Serbian "intellectuals" to understand the importance and urgency of a real agreement with the Croats and to make every effort to bring it about.

It was wise, too, to bring back Dr Ninchutch to the Foreign Office. Years have in no wise dimmed Ninchutch's powers, and he still stands in the eyes of his people as the man, who, having tried for years to come to an honest agreement with Italy, sent in his resignation to the King when the signing of the Tirana Pact in 1926 showed that Italy had been working all the time behind his back to obtain domination over Albania. What was not known at the time is that the policy of agreement with Italy, despite all reports from Yugoslav representatives in Albania, which showed that the Italians were double crossing, was dictated by King Alexander himself and was not favoured by Ninchutch. Ninchutch was

another of King Alexander's loyal friends, who, although he opposed the King's dictatorial policy, was constantly called in to advise the King on important points. It was to Ninchitch that the King, on the eve of his departure for Marseilles, admitted the failure of his dictatorship and appealed for help, on his return, in bringing his country back to a broad democratic basis. Alas, he never returned!

Other Ministers in the Cabinet represented every group in Yugoslav national life which was not hopelessly compromised to the Axis powers. The Slovene People's Party was represented by Dr. Krek, another leader famous for his courage in opposition; there were representatives of the Montenegrins, the Bosnians, the Serbian Peasant Party, the Croatian Peasant Party, and some of the smaller groups. Even Bogoljub (Borshko) Yevtitch, former dictator-premier, who had been accused of trying to form a national-fascist party to keep himself in power, was brought in. He is an honest and courageous man and was always intensely pro-French and anti-Italian.

It was Borshko Yevtitch, who, when the attack was made on King Alexander at Marseilles, can be seen on all the photographs running towards the King's carriage to try and save him while the crowd is scattering in all directions to avoid the assassin's bullets. It was Borshko who, as director of a

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Belgrade newspaper, threw from the office the Italian Military Attaché, Colonel Nicolosi, who kept threatening his editor for publishing "anti Italian" articles. He then threw his cloak and hat after him and turned towards the burly adjutant who had accompanied the Attaché. But the adjutant left hurriedly of his own accord. Later, when Yevtitch became in turn Minister in Albania, Foreign Minister, and Premier, it was deemed wise to put blame for this episode on Bora, his brother, but the only eye-witness present, the editor in question, assured me that it was really Borshko.

Another strong man who gave the Cabinet his full support was Milan Gavrilovitch, Serbian Peasant Party leader, who had been sent as Minister to Moscow when Prince Paul was forced, by the Russo-German Pact, to recognise Soviet Russia. Gavrilovitch (I wonder if he remembered in the snows of Moscow the glorious hot days we spent together bathing in the Sava, year after year, when he was in opposition?) had been working in Moscow for closer relations. He had succeeded in getting the Russians to offer a pact of friendship and non aggression, but Prince Paul, who hated the "Bolsheviks," and Tzintzar Markovitch, who loved the Germans among whom he had been educated and whose tongue he spoke better than his own, refused to listen. Indeed Gavrilovitch was about to return to Belgrade to make

last minute intercession for an agreement when the "Patriots'" revolution took place. He stayed on and the pact was actually signed just at the very moment when the Nazis made their foul attack, unwarranted and unheralded, on the open town of Belgrade.

This, then, was the group of men, determined and loyal, who rallied to the young King at this most fateful hour. The King himself was magnificent. There is a portrait of the boy which shows him in royal robes, a drawn sword across his body in an attitude of defence, his head held high, chin out, in defiance. There is something knightlike about the picture, painted by one of Belgrade's most famous portraitists. There is something very knightlike about the young King, trained like the knights of old in a hard school of chivalry and arms.

In his veins mingles the blood of three famous dynasties. From his father Alexander the Unifier comes the blood of the Karageorgevitch family—which fought for centuries for the liberation of their country from foreign rule—blended with that of the Montenegrin family, which had produced such offspring as the Prince Bishop Petrovitch-Njegosh, philosopher-poet, whose "Mountain Wreath" (Gorski Vjenatz) enshrines much of the epic history of his liberty loving mountain land. His mother comes from the stock of our own Royal Family. In

physique King Peter is of Serb or Montenegro type — tall, broad shouldered, with strong and well marked features. In character he combines the strength of will of his father with something of the philosophic nature of his grandfather, King Peter I, the Liberator, who spent his exile in Geneva, while the Obrenovitch dynasty were trying to sell Serbia to the Austrians, in translating into Serbian John Stuart Mill's "Liberty."

Peter's babyhood was delightful. His boyhood and young manhood have been tragic. As a tiny child, playing under the watchful eye of his mother, Queen Marie, among the mountains and forests of Slovenia, on the shores of the Adriatic, in the gardens and woods of Dedinje and Topchider near Belgrade, together with his younger brothers, Prince Tomislav and Prince Andraje, he was a sturdy, happy little fellow, full of life and fun. After the gravest of consultations it was decided when he was just eleven years of age to send him to school in England— largely to give him the chance to enjoy a few years longer the boyish liberties which are denied to a monarch-to-be in his own land.

King Alexander was very touched at their parting. He broke off some very important political talks and went secretly to the Slovene frontier to say "Good-bye." Taking his son by the hand at the frontier Alexander, who seemed to have some premonition of

what might happen to him, said, "Son, now we must part. I have work to do here. You must go to school. Be industrious, good and wise. Remember that great tasks await you in the future." Then he turned away to hide the strong emotion which he could not overcome. As he recrossed that frontier, not twenty days later, King in his dead Father's stead, the young boy remembered with tears in his eyes his father's words and determined to face the great tasks with courage and resolution.

For the last six and a half years Peter has been systematically trained for the tasks before him. His physical education has been almost exclusively in the hands of army officers of one of the toughest fighting forces of Europe. He has spent some hours each day in physical training and sport. At first he was trained alone with eight professors and an English tutor. His days were filled from 6.30 a.m. until 9 p.m. when he went tired to bed. Later it was found that this intensive training alone was increasing his natural shyness. A number of boys were chosen from all over Yugoslavia, and from all classes of the people. There were peasants, cobblers' sons, sons of professional men and of merchants. They were chosen because they were of good character, intelligent and athletic.

One of the most important influences on the young King was that of his English tutor, Mr. Cecil Parrott.

Mr Parrott took Peter camping on the mountains of Slovenia, climbing among even the highest and most dangerous peaks. He trained him in the arts of scoutcraft. He always said of him that he was a good scout.

I shall always remember Peter when he first returned from his school in England, where he had spent the happiest days of his short life, to occupy the throne of Yugoslavia. He looked so pathetic ally young as he marched down the long station at Belgrade and yet so dignified as he took the salute, accepted the General's report, gave the traditional greeting to the guard "May God help you, heroes!" in a shrill treble voice strangely in contrast to their thundered "God help you!" in reply. He took the bread and salt, the traditional welcome offered by the Mayor of Belgrade, shook hands solemnly with each of a long row of generals, within a few days of being informed in the dark rooms of the Yugoslav Legation in London of the tragic fate of his father he carried through with a calm, simple dignity all the ceremony connected with a monarch's return.

A few days later he was again in the spotlight at the funeral of his father. He sat, a pathetic but brave little figure in Sokol uniform, dangling his legs from a tall, black draped throne. His face was pale and serious as he looked first at the six enormous

guardsmen come to take away his father's coffin, then at his mother, in deepest mourning, her face furrowed with tears, who stood just behind him. Then he jumped down and with the utmost dignity slowly followed the coffin, accompanied by one of the most brilliant and distinguished companies of Kings, Princes, Presidents and diplomats his land had ever seen assembled.

Determination, application, devotion to duty and consideration for others are the characteristics most noticeable in the young King. By sheer will power he has overcome a shyness which made his duties doubly hard. By working day and night he has climbed to the top of his class and kept there. By enthusiasm he has become excellent at all handicrafts. He is keen on machines of all kinds and on science in all its branches. Of late years high army officers have instructed him, too, in the arts and science of war. He is a good shot, a first-class gymnast, as becomes the President of the Sokols, one of the finest gymnastic organisations in the world; he fences, swims, rows a boat, drives a car and is keenly interested in aviation.

He has been kept out of the limelight. Prince Paul believed that it would be bad for one so young to enjoy too much publicity. But behind the scenes he has been kept very closely in touch with events in his country. The Orthodox priests who had

charge of his religious education kept him informed of the feeling of the Serbian peasant people, who are the backbone of old Serbia, and the army officers who gave him military instruction told him what was happening in other parts of the country and outside. He had steeped himself deeply in the folk lore and folk history of his country. He had learned by heart and read over hundreds of times in his own spare time the magnificent folk epics, written and sung by the blind bards (*gusler*), in which the heroic history of his people and his forebears is recorded.

Peter knew, too, the part played in the creation of his country by France and Britain. He was drawn to Britain by too many bonds to be misled by appeasers. His few joyous days at the school where his younger brothers are still, his knowledge and love of the English language and literature, his many associations with men and women who had worked side by side with the British on the Salonika front and afterwards, defeating disease and famine in war-wrecked Serbia, all brought him on our side. Even more deeply was he influenced by the priests and soldiers around him who pointed out how every land which had submitted without a fight had been deceived by Hitler, robbed of its possessions, forced to work and even fight against its former friends and allies. All but the wilfully blind knew that Hitler's domination over Yugoslavia would mean

the break-up of this newly united land into its component parts. Hungary would take Baranje, Srem, possibly the Banat and a corridor to the Adriatic at Fiume. Germany would claim Slovenia and a road through to Trieste and Croatia down to the Sava. Bulgaria would claim South Serbia, Italy would take Dalmatia and a puppet Albania would be given large areas of South Yugoslavia. This would be the reward if Yugoslavia betrayed her ally Greece and her former ally Britain.

No one in Yugoslavia was in doubt of the alternatives before them. They wanted only peace, but it was denied them. They could choose between shameful betrayal of their allies, followed by dismemberment at their enemies' convenience, or face the violent, angry attacks of a savage, ruthless bully robbed of his prey. What looked like a peaceful way out had been prepared slowly and cleverly by the Quislings, Stojadinovitch, Tzvetkovitch and Tzintzar-Markovitch. Yet the people, knowing full well the fate which would be theirs if they chose not to give way, conscious of the fate of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium and France, remembering still the horrors of a three-year occupation in the last war and the evils of eight consecutive years of mobilisation from 1912 to 1920, rallied like one man behind their King and his Cabinet and chose not to give in. It was the only decision to be expected from a people

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who for over five centuries spent the whole of their national energies in fighting for liberty from foreign oppression. They echoed to a man the broadcast of the Serbian Patriarch, "If we have to die, let us die in faith and freedom as our ancestors did. This morning the nation has been cleansed of dust and flaws. God be praised for having preserved the nation from deviating from its unalterable path."

Yugoslavia which has for centuries been the battlefield of Europe, bulwark against aggression, has become once again a martyr for the cause of liberty. Those of us who know the South Slav peoples best are certain that heavy though the price may be they will not in Churchill's words "regret this staunch courage which has brought upon you this furious onslaught."

Let me end this chapter with a further quotation from the Premier's message sent on Easter Sunday to the South Slav people. "Your courage will shine out in the pages of history and will, too, reap a more immediate reward. Whatever you may lose in the present, you have saved the future."

When that future comes let us not forget the sacrifice this heroic people have made and the bitterness of the price they have paid. May we try to make the reward adequate.



QUEEN MARIE WITH THE THREE PRINCES—PETER, TOMISLAV AND ANDRIJE



MRS. SCHOOLFELLOWS

YUGOSLAVIA—  
LAND OF THE SOUTH SLAVS

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## YUGOSLAVIA— LAND OF THE SOUTH SLAVS

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Nor enough is known in this country of Yugoslavia, its people and its land. Considering that Yugoslavia came into being when it did, in 1918, largely as a result of the Allied victory in the last great war, and that Serbs, together with Croat and Slovene volunteers, played a not inconsiderable part in achieving that victory, it is amazing how little interest was shown after the war in the well-being of these loyal friends.

How deep that ignorance went can be seen from the fact that it was possible for a friend returning from Yugoslavia in 1926 to be asked in all seriousness by a high official of the British Foreign Office, “And how are things in Yugoslavia?” Even more dangerous, perhaps, was the superficial knowledge which led a famous woman explorer who had been three whole days in Yugoslavia to give me the following lecture. “This country can never last. It is impossible. How can they when they have

Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Hungarians, Germans, Bosnians, Herzegovinians, Dalmatians, Montenegrins, Albanians, Macedonians, Bulgars, Rumanians and Kutchuvlaks all in one land? So many races, so many tongues! It is impossible!"

When I ventured to suggest that after all the Montenegrins are the purest type of Serb, she replied indignantly, " You'll be telling me that the Albanians on Kosovo are Serbs next."

Superficially it is true there are an enormous number of differences, historical and racial, among the people of Yugoslavia. I will try by a brief historical survey to explain how these arose. But let us get this straight right from the beginning. The vast majority of the people of Yugoslavia, at least 12,000,000 out of 13,000,000, are Serbs, Croats and Slovenes who are one by race and language. The differences in dialect between the various parts of the country, with the possible exception of Slovenia, are certainly no greater than those between the spoken dialects of Kent, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Durham, while even Slovene is not more difficult for a Serb from Belgrade to understand than are some of the Scots and Welsh dialects of English to the Southerner.

It may seem strange even so to people used to living in a homogenous country like our own that between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 people of non-

Yugoslav race should have been included in the frontiers of this newly-formed state. Yet it is often not realised that over 2,000,000 people of Serb, Croat and Slovène blood remain outside those frontiers—there are purely Serbian villages within a few miles of Budapest, for example—not to mention the fact that the Bulgarians are also a South Slav race who have at least three times in their history tried to enter into partnership with their western brothers. These complications are explained by the geographical formation and the political history of the Balkan Peninsular.

If you look at a relief map of the Balkan Peninsular you will see that although it is a mountainous district, none of these mountains are so placed as to cut the Peninsular off from the outside world—as the Iberian Peninsular is cut off by the Pyrénées for example. This led to the Peninsular being swept by wave after wave of invaders, each of which left some traces of its passage on the land and in the blood of its people. The ancient Romans swept right across the land from west to east; the ancient Greeks penetrated for trade and culture along the river valleys from south to north right to the Danube and beyond. Later Turks swept up from the south-east, Hungarians and Austrians made conquests from the north. At one time there was a great Serbian Empire stretching from Dalmatia almost to the Black Sea. At another

time a Bulgarian Empire occupied for a brief while some of the most historic centres of Serbian culture.

As a result of all these cross movements there is hardly a town or province in the Balkans which could not be claimed on historical, cultural or racial grounds, more or less substantial, by two, three or even four of the surrounding states. We are all aware at present on what slight grounds modern states, when in expansionist mood, will lay claim to neighbouring territories. Even apart from the most modern claims made on the grounds of "Lebensraum" or "economic sphere of influence," the shifting fortunes of almost continuous wars during the last 1,000 years or more have given neighbouring states of the comparatively modern nationalistic type many more or less spurious claims to portions of Yugoslavia's territories. But a close examination of the historical and racial factors involved fully justifies, with a few small and insignificant exceptions, the frontiers drawn in 1918 and the years immediately following.

Yugoslavia was built up of the following historical units—Serbia, the nucleus around which a free South Slav land naturally grew, Croatia, Slovenia, Dalmatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and the Vojvodina.

The Slav peoples moved into the Balkan lands in a series of slow and uneven waves. There was no

sudden conquest but a gradual move forward by infiltration and piecemeal conquest. By the middle of the sixth century they had crossed the Danube, and two centuries later they seem to have penetrated into most parts of the Balkan Peninsula. They seem to have had no powerful national organisation, but to have been organised in smallish tribes in each of which the family was the unit, often with a strong and separate entity. Even to this day traces of tribal organisation and the strongly accentuated individuality of the family groups are to be remarked in many parts of the country.

There are still quite a number of "Zadruga"—co-operative family estates—still to be found in Bosnia and in Macedonia. One of these has over one hundred and fifty members. The oldest male—great, great-grandfather of the youngest members of the establishment—is in supreme command. Each morning he apportions the work between the men and women of the family. No member of the family may marry without his consent. When a boy marries he brings his wife back into the community, where she has to submit to the stern discipline of the older women. A girl who marries usually goes to her husband, who most usually in these parts of the country has to pay a considerable price for her as a worker in his fields and potential producer of more workers. Some of the "zadruga" are very up-to-

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date, have their own motor transport, farming machinery, marketing arrangements and sometimes send their clever children to the universities to learn scientific farming, forestry, etc. This was at one time the normal organisation of Serbian society in many districts, and has left its traces on the general organisation of society and the importance of the family in the social life even of the towns.

For a time in the Middle Ages very powerful Serbian states arose. In the thirteenth century the kingdoms of Rashka and Zeta arose—based one on the town of Petch, still an important religious centre, and the other on the Montenegrin mountain group, but including at times the fertile land around Lake Skadar (Skutari) and parts of the Dalmatian coast as far as but not including Dubrovnik.

On these foundations was created the great Serbian Empire of the fourteenth century, which reached the height of its glory under the Emperor Dushan. It is no use pretending that this empire was in any sense a national empire in the racial meaning of the word. It was rather like the Roman Empire, a conglomeration of states with little national feeling, but which as a result of conquest did come to have a common language, culture and religion. It is a most important fact in Yugoslav history that this Serbian Empire became attached in or about the year 1222 to the Orthodox—or Eastern Catholic faith. This was the

work of St. Sava, prince of the house of Nemanja, who left his father's court to become a monk. He it was who secured from the Patriarch at Nicæa the establishment of an autonomous Serbian Orthodox Church of which he became the first archbishop. St. Sava is revered throughout the whole Balkans as one of the founders of South Slav culture and education.

While many of the legends which have grown up around the great Serbian Empire of this period and its long succession of kings and princes, have a uniting effect upon the South Slav peoples—Kraljevitch Marko, for instance, is the legendary hero of all the South Slav peoples from Slovenia to the Black Sea—the fact that one large section of the race was to become Orthodox while a great part of the remainder was Roman Catholic, undoubtedly had a great dividing influence which has even yet not completely lost its effect.

It is probable that at the time of the Emperor Dushan, the Medieval Serbian Empire reached its greatest not only from a territorial but also from a cultural point of view. Its frontiers ran from the River Sava to Janina and it included most of the western mountains which later became Albania, as well as most of that land of mixed races and nationalities, Macedonia. At this time Skoplje became the centre of the Empire and as a result

Maccedonia contains most of the beautiful churches raised by Dushan and his immediate predecessors—churches which became shrines of national sentiment during the dark ages when the land was under foreign and non Christian domination. At this time the Serbian Empire was growing so rapidly that it seemed certain that Dushan would take Constantinople and set himself up as the Eastern Roman Emperor—a title which he sometimes used.

To judge from the marvellous frescoes of the ancient Byzantine monasteries built in this period, the standard of living and the cultural level of the people of this empire must have been comparatively very high. A doctor friend of mine made a careful study of these frescoes in order to learn something of the standard of health and hygiene at that time. It is obvious that the painters used local models, dressed in the costume of the period and so illustrating closely the standard of living of the people.

For instance, one of the frescoes in the Visoko Dechani Monastery, perhaps the most beautiful of all the Serbian monasteries, shows the Virgin Mary bathing the Infant Christ. The baby is beautifully developed and is held by the Mother in most approved modern fashion, head supported on the Mother's upper arm. The bath is mounted on legs to make the process of bathing easy for the Mother. A large,

clean towel is spread out on a stool ready to dry the baby. Nearby is a cradle of wicker-work and below the mattress inside it are a row of holes to give ventilation in a most modern manner. The whole scene showed a very high level of cleanliness and a knowledge of hygiene most exceptional for that period and certainly not exceeded if equalled in the most progressive western states of that day.

It was at Visoko Dechani that a Scotswoman of our party, a delightful person who loved the Serbs greatly and devoted some of the best years of her life to teaching many of them English, burst into indignation when she saw how the plaster round the eyes, mouths and noses of many of the finest of the glorious medieval frescoes had been gouged out, leaving gaping holes. "Who did this?" she asked the Archimandrite, a great bearded giant of a man who had with his own carbine shot seven bandits who had attacked the monastery the winter before. "Was it the Bulgars?" "No," he replied. "Was it the Albanians?" "No," came the answer again. "Then it must have been the Turks," she said, "what sacrilege!" But the Archimandrite again shook his head. "No, it was our own peasants," he explained. "This fresco was the portrait of a famous Serbian king who was taken prisoner by the Turks and carried off to Constantinople. To prevent him from escaping his eyes were put out. He prayed God for

help and miraculously his sight was restored and he returned to his homeland. Later whenever one of our pious peasants had any trouble with his eyes he would take a little of the paint from the eyes of this fresco and make a paste with which to anoint his eyes in the belief that he would miraculously be made well. So first the paint was worn away and then the plaster behind, and when that was all gone the eyes and by analogy the mouths and noses of nearby figures were all removed." Even the Moslem Albanians of the district, who revered the Monastery greatly and guarded it against all danger during the war of occupation, took to using this plaster as a charm and finally armed police guards had to be mounted to prevent the total ruin of the frescoes.

Under Dushan many schools were also founded throughout the country, trade, home and foreign, flourished, fine roads were built for strategic and commercial purposes, and a code of law, "Dushan's Code," which shows a very high degree of legal knowledge and a rare sense of justice, was published. Had Dushan lived longer, or had he been succeeded by a line of strong and powerful monarchs, the Serbian Empire might have rivalled those of ancient Rome and Greece for its contributions to culture and civilisation. Alas this was not to be. On the death of Dushan weaklings took his place, civil war broke out, and the forces of Christendom being divided



and occupied elsewhere, the Serbian Empire fell gradually to pieces under the blows of the fanatical Moslem troops of the Ottoman Sultans.

Anyone who has ever visited Yugoslavia must have heard of the Battle of Kosovo and the many legends concerning it. It is generally considered in the folk-lore of the Balkans that the defeat of King Lazar on Kosovo Plain (Blackbirds' Plain) on June 15th, 1389, marks the end of the Serbian Medieval Empire and the beginning of five centuries of foreign rule. Actually the process of the Turkish occupation of the Balkans was a slow one and it was well over a century after Kosovo before the last outposts of the former Serbian Empire were taken. In the minds of the Serbian masses and in their magnificent epic songs, which were sung by blind bards who accompanied themselves on curious one-string instruments which gave a vibrant, stirring background to their rather monotonous chant, Kosovo is the day of the great national tragedy. Every Serbian child knows the story of how Tsar Lazar chose rather a heavenly than an earthly crown, of the treachery of Milosh Obilitch, redeemed at last by his courage in entering the tent of the Turkish Sultan and killing him, and of the heroic struggles of the nine brothers Yugovitchi who died on that field.

It is worth while to make a pilgrimage to Kosovo in June. The undulating plain is covered with

masses of small limestone pieces which look exactly like bones, and which the people of the district firmly believe to be the bones of the slain in that great battle. As though to prove the legends the graves of the Sultan and two of his generals stand in the middle of what must have been the battlefield. The coffins can still be seen through the windows of the tombs the floor of which is covered with rich oriental carpets. But, most wonderful of all, the field is covered at this time by masses of the most glorious scarlet peonies I have ever seen, which are popularly believed to have been white before the battle but were dyed red with the blood of the slain. It is said that these great translucent single peonies will grow only on Kosovo and that all attempts to transplant them fail. One day I mean to try.

In 1912, when the victorious Serbian army drove the Turks from this field they had held for over five hundred years, there were scenes of intense rejoicing. As they reached this historic spot King Peter, his generals and the whole army fell on their knees, kissed the sacred earth, and praised God for their victory. To-day once again Kosovo has been a battlefield. German mechanised columns have crushed the peony plants already big with bud. And at night, doubtless, once again as in the Serbian legend the girls of Kosovo will have stolen out to tend the wounded and bewail the dead.

From soon after the Battle of Kosovo until the early days of the nineteenth century the history of the Serbs was one long tale of revolts against oppression. At first the Turkish rule was not oppressive. The peasants were allowed to farm the land which had formerly belonged to big land-owners, most of whom had fled or been killed in battle. They had to pay taxes, but while the Turkish Empire prospered these were not too heavy. Nor was religious intolerance too great. But as the Turkish Empire weakened, as corruption grew among its officials, and as the Christian church became more and more a centre for the organising of revolt against the Moslem domination the plight of the Serbs became worse and worse. The “raja”—Serbian peasants who refused to become Moslem—had no rights and were oppressed not only by the Turkish overlords, the “Pashas” who levied heavy taxes in the name of the Empire, but also by the Janisaries, young soldiers brought from distant parts of the Turkish Empire, who were bound by no laws and would pillage the Serbian villages and carry off the most beautiful women for their harems without mercy.

The Serbs were uncomfortable subjects. Led by their Orthodox priests they were almost constantly in revolt. In the spring, on St. George’s Day, the young men would leave their homes and take to the forests and mountains, whence they harried the

Turkish tax collectors and troops. The profession of "hajduk"—a Christian bandit who robbed Turkish tax collectors and pashas and often gave much of the proceeds to the poor Serbs—was one of the most honourable. And as the Turkish Empire became weaker and Turkey became the "sick man of Europe" the size and daring of the "comitadjis" bands (irregular troops who fought from the forests and mountains in summer) became increasingly great.

When the situation of the Serbian peasant was at its worst a new hope arose in the person of Kara (Black) George, founder of the Karageorgevitch dynasty. Kara George was a man of the people, a simple peasant, burning with indignation at the treatment of his fellow Serbs and determined to win liberty for them and himself. In 1787, already he left Serbia and took service with the Austrian army to learn the science of arms. He crossed frequently into Serbian territory, where he joined the "comitadjis" and led one of the many bands working in the forests. Finally, to obtain money with which to buy arms and facilities for their importation, he became a pig dealer—selling Serbian pigs in Austria and smuggling in arms bought with the proceeds of the sale. His headquarters were near Topola which has become one of Serbia's national shrines.

In 1805 Kara George raised the whole of the thickly forested Shumadija district—which stretched

roughly from Belgrade almost to Nish and westward to the confines of Bosnia—in open revolt. But the Turk though sick was by no means a dying man yet. As the Napoleonic wars kept the Christian forces of Europe otherwise engaged and Kara George's small force of ill-armed men was met eventually by forces infinitely superior in numbers and in armament, in 1813 he was driven out of the country and a period of massacre and ruthless repression followed.

In 1815, Milosh Obrenovitch, a Serbian official of the Turkish regime, took over the leadership of the rebels and again raised the standard of revolt. With the aid of foreign pressure he secured a certain degree of autonomy for Serbia. But there were still Turkish garrisons in Belgrade and other fortresses and until 1830 a number of Turkish officials. In 1830, owing to Russian intervention after they had defeated the Turks, Milosh became Prince of Serbia and paid his tribute as a lump sum. Thus the land was almost freed from Turkish officials and influence though still under the suzerainty of Constantinople.

Like so many of the Serbian rulers who came after him Milosh tried to rule as a complete despot. He soon came up against the inherently democratic feeling of his peasant people and in 1839 was forced to abdicate.

The next seventy years were filled with the bickerings of a series of kings, some of the Obrenovitch,

some of the Kara Georgevitch dynasty. Hot-headed and impetuous men, they usually quarrelled after a few years with their own people and were replaced by their own sons or by a descendant of the rival dynasty. The details of this succession are of little interest.

It is however worth noting that throughout this period there were constant relations between the Serbs of free Serbia, which got rid of the last trace of Turkish rule in 1878 (still only sixty odd years ago) when its independence was recognised by the Treaty of Berlin and the Turkish garrisons marched for the last time from its fortresses, and those of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The free Serbian state had many attractions for the Slavs of "across the Sava." It was a purely peasant state—there were no big landlords and no aristocracy—nothing between the King at the apex and the peasants who formed the whole nation. Despite the efforts of some of its rulers it was essentially a democratic state in that its people, if the ruler persisted in refusing to listen to their demands, merely removed him and put another in his place. Finally, owing primarily to the work of Kara George's trusted friend, Vul Karadjitch, Serbia had developed a comparatively free and good system of elementary education and the foundations had been laid for the development of a Yugoslav literature.

In 1893, Alexander Obrenovitch, who had become King under a Regent when his father Milan abdicated

in 1889 (under pressure of that public opinion which in Serbia will never tolerate a dictator) suddenly arrested the Regent during a great dinner at the Palace, and though only seventeen years old declared himself of age. There was popular rejoicing when the young King took office, for the Regency had been bad. But within a few years it was obvious that the King was even worse. In 1900 he distressed public opinion and the Church by marrying his old father's mistress, Draga, who was already the divorced wife of a colonel. Under this woman's evil influence he oppressed his people, increased taxation and repressed all attempts at the expression of popular discontent. To the scandal of all Europe this ambitious woman pretended to the world that she was about to have a child to inherit the throne. She had arranged to borrow the child of a peasant from her country estate and had succeeded by her clever padding in convincing her infatuated husband that she was pregnant. Unfortunately for her plan the Russian Court, which was interested in this event, sent two of its best surgeons to be present at the birth. The fraud was discovered.

To protect herself and the King from the growing tide of public opinion, Draga played into the hands of the Austrians. Finally it came to the ears of a group of very sincere, intensely patriotic officers, led by Colonel Dimitrijevitch, popularly known as

“Apis,” that Alexander was planning to sell the country into the power of Austria. To prevent this and to put an end to the everyday scandals which discredited the Serbian Court and country, they decided to execute the King. Merely to dethrone him would have resulted, as they knew from the recent and past history of their country, in another civil war.

On the night of May 3rd, 1903, the *coup d'état* took place. It is highly probable that the band of officers, even though they had justification enough, had no intention of killing the Queen. But when the first shots were fired she threw herself in front of the King and was killed at the same moment. The double murder, which was wrongly presented to an ill informed and uncaring world, caused a great sensation in Europe and caused several countries, Great Britain most important among them, to withdraw their diplomatic representatives and sever relations for a number of years.

In all fairness let this be said for the execution squad. No political assassination in history has been more justified than this one, which not only saved the liberty and honour of the country but averted a civil war in which thousands would have been killed. Colonel Dimitrijevitch who has been presented as a loathsome, bloodthirsty beast and who was shot after the Salonika trials on an unproven charge of attempt

ing to kill Prince Alexander Karageorgevitch, has been described to me by everyone who knew him as a man of the highest culture, keenest patriotism and most extraordinary genius for organisation. Also the conspirators agreed (and with the exception of one, Zhivkovitch, later Premier under King Alexander, kept their promise) that no one of them should seek any reward for his part in the plot. Alas, to placate a misinformed world opinion most of them had to be dismissed from public life and several of them lost their lives at Salonika in 1917.

Prince Peter Karageorgevitch, descendant of Kara George and husband of the daughter of Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, who had been living for some years in exile in Geneva and who knew nothing whatever about the plot to dethrone the last of the Obrenovitch's, was invited to take the throne. With considerable courage Peter accepted the post, to face a hostile Austria and a disapproving Europe.

King Peter decided to meet the hostility of Austria by cultivating friendship with Russia and with his Balkan neighbours. As a result of his customs agreement with Bulgaria and negotiations with Greece, together with growing commercial and political relations with France, Austria began an economic war against Serbia. She put prohibitive tariffs on the main imports from Serbia. But King Peter found other outlets for Serbia's trade.

This economic war, known to us as the "Pig War," as pigs formed the chief Serbian export to Austria, led to a keen realisation by Serbia of the importance of the Vardar Valley and of her need for an outlet on the Adriatic. Her bitterness was all the greater than when Austria in 1908 annexed to herself the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were inhabited by a purely Serbo-Croat population. This cut off all direct communications with the free Serbian State of Montenegro and all hopes of obtaining access through these Slav lands to the sea.

Serbia now began to realise that her whole national independence, so recently won and at a cost of so much bloodshed and suffering, was at stake. Either she must ensure her trade routes to the outer world or she must submit, as Turkey got weaker and weaker, to see her place taken by Austria Hungary, which was playing openly and definitely now for complete hegemony of the Balkans.

In 1912 the chance arose to utilise her new friendship with Bulgaria, comparatively recently freed from Turkish rule with Russian help, and Greece. A series of military alliances was concluded and the Balkan League came into being. The first task of the League was to try to secure the liberation of their fellows in Macedonia, where the Young Turks were carrying through a policy of intensive "Turkification" and submitting the unwilling population (2

curious welter of Serbs, Bulgars, Greeks, Kutchi-vlaks, and Albanians of which the majority were Slav by origin, possibly belonging to a separate race akin to both Serbs and Bulgars but identical with neither) to a regime of the most poignant terror. The League sent an ultimatum to Turkey demanding that the European provinces of Turkey should be given autonomy under the control of Swiss or Belgian governors. Turkey, as they had expected, refused this demand and declared war on Serbia and Bulgaria.

Within a few days, greatly to the surprise of a Europe which was even in those days slow to notice the development of new forces, the Serbs had smashed their way through to Skoplje, Tzar Dushan's capital, had avenged Kosovo and recaptured Prishtina, Prizren and Bitolj. The Bulgars had thrown back the Turks at Chatalja, even the tiny Montenegrin State had captured Petch and the Greeks had taken Salonika. By December, despite the threats of Austria that she would not tolerate the occupation by the Serbs of any Adriatic port, the Serbs had occupied Durazzo. An armistice was arranged, but was broken by the Turks early in 1913. The League victories were continued. Adrianople fell to the Bulgars and Serbs, Janina to the Greeks, and Skadar (Scutari) to the Montenegrins. The Turks sued for peace.

The jubilant allies were not, however, to be allowed

to enjoy the fruits of victory undisturbed Austria and Italy were both frightened at the prospect of a powerful and allied group of Balkan States which would lie in the path of the fulfilment of their great desires—Austria to get to Silonika and Italy to seize Albania so that she could close the Adriatic and make it in very truth “an Italian lake.” Austria acted with all the cunning of an old diplomat. She pressed for the creation of an independant Albania which should include Skadar to be given up by the Moatenegevins and Durazzo the much desired port captured by the Serbs. Austria knew quite well that if Serbia were balked of the fruits of her great victories she would have to demand from Bulgaria and possibly Greece a readjustment of frontiers in the south. This would obviously cause friction, war and weakness in the Balkans.

When all her gains in the west were taken by the Great Powers from Serbia she did ask for a readjustment of frontiers in the south, where she had been prepared in view of the Adriatic gains on which she counted to yield far more to the Bulgars than history or racial considerations justified. But the Bulgars were giving nothing up. Despite the fact that Serbia had won most of the great victories of the war against the Turks and had given even more aid than she had contracted to give to the Allied cause Bulgaria insisted on her full pound of

flesh. When the Serbs refused to agree to this unfair attitude the Bulgars, for the first of three times in recent history, made a sudden, unannounced and unprovoked attack on their neighbour.

The Bulgar officers at Shtip asked their Serbian colleagues to a great victory dinner. They drank toast for toast—but while the Serbs were given wine the Bulgars drank coloured water. At midnight the Serbian officers, mellow with drink, crossed the new frontier and rejoined their troops. While the drunken Serbian officers slept the Bulgars suddenly launched an attack.

But the Serbian troops can fight even without officers. The Bulgars were thrown back, and as they were attacked soon afterwards by the Greeks in the south and the Rumanians in the north they were forced to make a disastrous peace within a few weeks. Even the Turks joined in and retook Adrianople. Rumania took the Dobrudja. And Serbia took Bitolj and Ohrid—towns to which she had truly the strongest of racial and historical rights, but which she had been prepared to let Bulgaria have if she got her outlet on the Adriatic.

Serbia had grown into a considerable and powerful state as compared with the tiny principality which emerged in 1807. She had achieved joint frontiers with Greece and Montenegro; she was astride the important Vardar Valley, she had a good strategic

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frontier against Bulgaria. But she had earned the eternal enmity of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria and of the Austro-Hungarian Court. The uneasiness of Austria was all the greater as she found that the brilliant victories of the Serbs had aroused their Serb and Croatian brothers under the Austrian flag to a pitch of enthusiasm rarely equalled before Serbia had become the Piedmont of Yugoslavia. But it was to cost her much blood and suffering to realise the unity of the true people.

SOUTH SLAVS FROM  
“OVER THE SAVA”

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### CHAPTER III

## SOUTH SLAVS FROM “OVER THE SAVA”

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DESPITE all her sufferings throughout the dark years of eclipse and foreign domination the Serbs of Serbia had some undoubted advantages over their brother races to the north and west. The Serbs were all (any possible exceptions were insignificant) Orthodox Christians ; they used the same alphabet (Cyrillic—the letters being almost like those of the Russian alphabet) ; they were all peasants or so near to the peasant as to have identical interests, there was no middle or aristocratic class ; and having always lived in a unitary state they had no idea of more complicated forms such as federation, autonomous provinces, etc., etc.

Not so the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes who lived outside the territories of Serbia proper. These were divided by religion, by having lived in different states with widely different systems, by the fact that some used the Cyrillic and others the Latin alphabets, by the fact that they lived under more or

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less feudal economic systems with rich landowners and prosperous officials whose interests were often widely divergent from those of the peasants of their own race, and by the fact that whereas the Serbs had throughout most of their history only one main enemy to fight against, they were used from time to time by various outside forces—religious, social and national—to fight against a whole series of different enemies.

If you stand on the walls of the old Roman-cum-Turkish fortress of Belgrade, on the very last outcrop of the great mountain ranges rising to the south and west, you look north over the junction of the Sava and the Danube to the low level plains of Srem and the Voivodina. Geographically part of the rich, fertile land of the so-called Hungarian Plain, these lands have belonged at various times in the last two thousand years to many different empires and have been under political domination as different as Roman, Hungarian, Turkish and Austrian. Only for a brief time in their history prior to 1918 did some parts of these territories belong to a slightly autonomous grouping of Slav provinces known as Croatia-Slavonia. For by far the greater part of the last thousand years they were under the domination of Hungary and submitted to a drastic policy of Magyarisation.

As a result of their chequered history, of the fact

that they live on fertile lands in the valleys of great rivers, and on the frontiers of the one-time Turkish Empire against which Christian Europe had to be defended, this district has a most amazing mixture of peoples. Near the south the population is predominantly Slav—a mixture of Serbs and Croats—but even within a few miles of Belgrade there is a purely German village, where you could still get good German sausage and beer and see peasants in old German dress dance waltzes and polkas to the strains of old German tunes. These were colonists brought to guard the frontier by Maria-Theresa. They came from north Germany and have remained racially very pure. Farther north the mixture grows. You can pass within an hour through villages which are in turn purely Serbian, Croatian, Hungarian, Austrian (German), and Rumanian and through others where the people are a mixture of these four races. Many of the peasants of this district speak all four languages—which is the more extraordinary as they are representative of four entirely different linguistic groups—one Slav, one German, one Latin and Hungarian, which is alleged to be unique in Europe save for some faint historical relationship to Finnish.

The Slavs, who form the greatest racially homogeneous part of this mixed population, are Croats, Slav tribes which lived most of their history under the domination of the western world and accepted

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the Catholic faith and the Latin alphabet, and Serbs, presumably successive waves of refugees who fled before the Turkish advance or escaped from their oppression, and who came to fight under the Austro-Hungarian flags against the common enemy. Most of the Serbs retained their Orthodox Christian faith and liked to use the Cyrillic alphabet. Those who lived along the former Turkish frontier, which was for many years part of the Military Province organised for the defence of Austria, enjoyed for long periods special privileges, owned communally large lands and rich forests, were allowed to be Orthodox and were not subjected to the same intense policy of de-nationalisation as those farther removed from the danger area on the frontiers. But as the Turks got weaker and the danger less even in these districts attempts at Magyarisation and Germanisation were made. This led to the normal reaction—the growth of a strong pan-Slav movement to protect the racial and linguistic liberties of the people.

Farther to the west lie the territories of Croatia, a much more predominantly Slav district, which looks back through the magnifying mist of legend and tradition, to a glorious era when it had its own kings and for a short time its own empire. In 1102 this independent Croatian State was united, apparently by consent, to the Hungarian crown. There was later much controversy as to the exact terms on



which this union took place. Croatia did, however, retain a considerable degree of autonomy, which varied from time to time but never completely disappeared.

As the medieval period during which religion and loyalty to a dynasty were of more importance than nationality blended gradually into the more modern period where racial attributes may outweigh all other considerations, the lot of the Slavs in Croatia and in Slovenia became worse. They were used as pawns in the long-drawn-out game between the Hungarians and the Austrians. First one, then the other made use of them in its own interest.

In 1848, that year of general revolution throughout Europe, the Croats also threatened revolt against their Austrian overlords. They were in touch with the Hungarians, who were also at that time seeking to extend their own power at the expense of Austria. Had the two been able to agree there can be no doubt that they could have secured perfect liberty of action. But the Hungarians, who were seeking autonomy on the grounds of individual nationality, were unwilling to grant similar rights to the Croats on identical grounds. As no agreement could be reached and the Austrians held out hopes of considerable measures of home rule if help were given against the Hungarians, the Croats threw in their lot with the Austrians. With the help of Ban Yelatchitch and

40,000 Croats the Hungarians were hopelessly defeated in September, 1849.

Within a very short time, however, Austria began to realise that there was a strong movement among the very numerous Slavs within her borders either for complete home rule or for independence. She chose therefore to come to an agreement with Hungary which would enable the Hungarians to keep down a large part of her Slav population, including most of Croatia, and leave her with a comparatively small and quiescent body of Slavs to deal with. An agreement was therefore made whereby in return for specious and purposely vague promises of "liberality" towards the Slavs, Croatia was again put under Hungarian domination. Austria retained domination over Dalmatia, parts of the Military Province which was attached directly to the Habsburg crown, and Slovenia. Slovenia—first of the south Slav districts to be completely Germanised—had more kinship in many ways with the Czechs than with the Croats and Serbs. More of that later.

The Hungarians lost no time in applying the clause of the agreement with the Croats, which was forced through the Croatian Diet by means which would have aroused indignation in Europe before the Totalitarian States made such methods normal once again, giving them the right to appoint the Ban (Governor) of Croatia. They appointed Count

Khuen-Hedervary, who later became Premier of Hungary. He evolved a simple manner to keep the Croatians quiet. Firstly he refused all employment in the State services to those who did not favour the Hungarian regime. Secondly he set the Croats against the Orthodox Serbs, who were very numerous even in the very heart of Croatia, where they had taken refuge in successive waves during the Turkish invasions of their own land.

There followed a period during which the Croatians tried to use Hungarians against Austria, Austria against the Hungarians, in their efforts to win autonomy. The height of their ambition seems to have been to make Austro-Hungary into a Triune instead of a Dual Monarchy. The two ideas of autonomy and federation became as indelibly marked on their political conscience as centralism and unity were on that of the Serbs. Most of the Croatian politicians of any importance were perpetually in opposition in the Hungarian Parliament, or the Vienna one, as well as in their own local Diet. This gave them a remarkable skill in opposition work, sabotage, delaying tactics, provocation of the Government, but comparatively little experience of administrative and executive work.

Several times it seemed that the Croats would succeed in using differences between the Austrians and Hungarians to secure some measure of justice

for themselves. But always at the last moment Austria and Hungary came to an agreement and Croatia was left out in the cold again. In desperation a movement of great historical importance began. It was a move to bring together the Croats and the Serbs of Croatia in a joint pan Slav movement. This movement was linked up and drew considerable force from other movements of loose standing in the literary and cultural world. The work of Vuk Karadjitch in unifying the Serbian dialects and standardising their grammar had had some considerable results throughout the over Sava provinces. There was at one time a strong movement for the adoption of Vuk's standards throughout the whole of Croatia and of Slovenia too. The Yugoslav idea, for this was at last dawning, was also greatly helped and strengthened by the Czech nationalist movement which was being developed in Prague by Dr Masaryk.

In 1903 this movement led already to open political action. Croatian deputies met at Fiume and passed a resolution asserting the right of every nation (meaning thereby race) to decide its own fate. A few days later Serbian deputies from Croatia met at Zadar (Zara, later taken by Italy) and having declared their agreement with the resolution demanded immediate joint political action between the Serbs and Croats in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

/ The Empire took the usual steps of failing

dictatorial states to prop up their disappearing powers. The constitution was suspended, vast scale "treason trials" were staged in Zagreb, tiny concessions were offered and withdrawn. Meanwhile the Serbian victories over the Turks and rumours of the growing strength of the Balkan Alliance which was about to come into being won the allegiance of increasing numbers of the Croats. As is usual repression is the best fertiliser for the growing of national feeling. Another grave difficulty in the way of an agreement between the Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs was smoothed away when in July, 1914, the Serbs signed a Concordat with the Vatican.

The rise of national feeling, the work of cultural and literary forces, disgust at the constant duplicity of the Hungarians and the Austrians, pride of race in military victories, all these and many more various currents in favour of a great pan-Slav movement and of union between the Croats and the Serbs of the Serbian Kingdom happened to coincide at this time. Another strong force which helped on this movement was the social-economic motive. The great land-owners of Croatia were mostly Hungarian or Austrian. But the mass of the peasants were Slav. The growth of the Croatian Peasant Movement, organised largely by one man, Stjepan Raditch, naturally led to a movement towards other peasant lands and especially those lands where as in Serbia

and Bulgaria the peasants owned their own lands and wielded considerable political power.

I am sorry to have to inflict so much rather ancient history upon you. But it really is impossible to understand the numerous and complicated problems which faced the newly-formed Yugoslavia in 1918 unless you know briefly the origin and past history of the people who found themselves rather suddenly and not entirely expectedly thrown together within her boundaries. I will deal as briefly as can be with the other territories which were brought into Yugoslavia and then we can get on to more recent and more topical matters.

Slovenia, only part of which was included in Yugoslavia, more than half of its population being given to Italy or left in Austria, seems never to have had a separate existence as a nation. The Slovencs were certainly the first of the South Slav peoples completely to lose their liberty, and during six hundred odd years of intensive Germanisation they lost some of their national characteristics. Yet as a mountain people, living on the south-eastern slopes of the Alps, they did retain not only their language but also a keenly independent attitude not unlike that of the Welsh. As an industrious, intelligent people, driven from their mountain homes by the urge of poverty, they made excellent civil servants, and many thousands of them joined the Austrian

service and did duty in all parts of the Empire.

Little was heard of Slovene national feeling until the sixteenth century, when an exile from Germany preached the reformed doctrines in Slovene and caused a great interest in the language which was by no means restricted to the Slovene lands. Later the famous Matija Gubatz preached the need for land reform and some degree of Slovene autonomy but his movement was put down with such severity that it left little trace.

The real source of the resurrection of national feeling in Slovenia (apart from the growth of national feeling everywhere during the nineteenth century) was the Illyrian experiment tried by Napoleon between 1809 and 1814. Inspired by the theory that the South Slav peoples had been the inhabitants of ancient Illyria he tried to recreate an Illyrian state. It included most of the Slovene people, including those of Istria and Western Croatia, including the Croatian Coast, and Dalmatia, including the Republic of Dubrovnik, which never regained its once-boasted liberty. Its capital was at Ljubljana—where a Slovene newspaper had been published under French influence as early as 1797. Even after the restoration of the Illyrian provinces to Austria in 1815, some traces of this amalgamation of Slovenes with Serbs and Croats were still to be found for a number of years, and the growth of a powerful

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Yugoslav movement in these parts certainly dates from that period of union under the benevolent administration of the French.

The north part of the west Adriatic coast, known as the Croatian coast, is largely composed of almost impassable steep, barren limestone mountains, unbroken by river valleys as most of the Karst rivers disappear underground long before they reach the sea and so form no valleys. Farther south, however, the coastal plain is rather wider and a number of valleys cut through the rim of high mountains and give access to the fertile lands and rich forests of Bosnia and Herzegovina which lie behind. This is Dalmatia, which with the Montenegrin coast, contains some of the finest harbours of the whole Adriatic Sea. Shibenik, Split, Gratz near Dubrovnik and Kotor are the best of them.

The people of the Yugoslav Adriatic coast were almost purely Croat in the north, purely Serbian (Orthodox Montenegrin mainly) in the south and very mixed in the centre. In addition to being at times under Turkish rule they were almost constantly under the influence of the Republic of Venice. One of their greatest tragedies, the loss of the trees which resulted in the almost total erosion of the soil from the steep limestone slopes and their consequent barrenness, was due to the ruthless cutting of timber to make the piles on which Venice was built.

Possession of excellent, deep harbours, hidden amid a fringe of islands or, as in the case of Kotor, lying on deep fiords winding far back into the mountains, gave rise to a race of hardy seamen. But the narrowness of the coastal plain and its poverty in timber and foodstuffs led the people soon to become pirates. There was something political in their piracy. What the hajduks, the Christian bandits, were to the Turks on land so the Uskoks and the Naretvians were to Turkish shipping in the Adriatic.

So famous did the Slavs of this coast become for their seamanship and courage that King Peter the Great of Russia enlisted many of them to man the ships of his newly created navy. They were the backbone of the Austrian navy too. In 1914 it was a Srzentitch, a Montenegrin from Ultzinj, who tried to lead a revolt against Austria in the navy at Kotor and was shot therefore. In 1918 it was a Slovene Admiral who led the revolt at Pola and handed over most of the Austrian ships to the Allies.

Several of the numerous wars between Turkey and Venice were started because of the Dalmatian pirates. The Turks claimed that the Venetians were to blame for their continued existence and despite the fact that the pirates took almost as heavy a toll of the shipping of Venice as of that of the Turks made it an excuse for war.

Although Dalmatia was undoubtedly under Italian

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influence throughout many centuries it never became Italianised. Roman settlements such as that of Diocletian left no trace except their delightful and beautiful ruins Venetian influence introduced a number of Latin words into the Slav dialect of the coast and led to the educated class, the traders of the Dubrovnik Republic for example, talking Italian as well as their native tongue Zadar (Zara) was the one town which had in 1913 anything approaching an Italian majority and that for a very curious reason. Zadar was the administrative capital of Croatia. It was therefore full of civil servants. The Hungarians themselves made very bad civil servants and always employed people of their subject races for all the minor offices at least. But to avoid them using their office to favour their own people such state employees were usually moved to other districts in the Empire. Thus it was that in the Slav district of Croatia many Italians were employed in the civil service and were settled at Zadar. This slight majority, despite the fact that the whole hinterland of the town was purely Slav, was considered a sufficient reason for giving Zadar to Italy after the war. Though Italy, especially expansionist Fascist Italy, lays claim to Dalmatia, the falsity of this claim is demonstrated by the fact that of nearly one million people inhabiting the coastal regions of the west Adriatic, only 15,000 are Italian, and many of these have only recently come to live there.

For the last century before the creation of Yugoslavia Dalmatia was under Austrian rule. The Austrians left even less trace on the country than did the Italians.

Most fascinating of the peoples of Yugoslavia from many points of view are the Montenegrins. They possess all the virtues usually attributed to aristocracy. Tall, handsome men, with thin, high-bridged noses, and long slender hands, they abstain as far as is humanly possible from all physical work save the honourable arts of war and the chase, to which have now been added other types of "sport." Of all the peoples of the Balkans they are the only ones who can claim with any truth never to have been completely subdued by any of the many conquerors who swept the peninsular. And though this was partly due to the fact that they lived amid the inhospitable heights of the Black Mountains it was far more certainly due to their immense courage and their refusal to accept defeat. On numerous occasions they defeated Turkish forces ten times their own strength, and when on one occasion they were defeated by tremendously superior forces and most of their thirty thousand men killed or dispersed, it was not more than a year or so before they had assembled an army again and revenged themselves by smashing defeats on the Turks.

It would be a pity to attempt to telescope the

history of this great little people whom even Napoleon failed to quell into a few sentences It should be read in more detail A good outline is given in *Yugoslavia in the Nations of To-day Series* edited by the late John Buchan, but the romantic history which the land and its people deserve has not yet been written in English

Suffice it to say that Montenegro became a place of refuge during the Turkish invasion for all the bolder spirits of the South Slav peoples Many of the Serbian nobles of the former great Empire sought sanctuary in these forbidding mountains rather than submit to infidel rule The standard of intelligence was very high and despite the cruel poverty due to the extremely barren and unproductive nature of these bleak mountain tops education and culture were not neglected In fact a printing press was in use in Montenegro in 1493—only a few years behind Caxton in England and well in advance of many far more prosperous lands It is true that the type had to be melted down some years later to make bullets to repel a Turkish invasion, but it was typical of the enlightened state of this tiny people that they should ever have had what Europe of those days considered such a luxury It is true that the Montenegrins did not live entirely on the produce of their extensive rock fields with their pocket handkerchief fields of cultivated soil miles apart Cattle stealing and pillage of



THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JACOB AT SHIBENIK

the Turks on land, piracy against Turkey and Venice on the sea supplemented their supplies while subsidies from Russia, or Austria, or both enabled a rather higher standard of living than would otherwise have been possible. It is even said that the Montenegrins became so used to living on subsidies that they could afford to pick and choose. This is illustrated by the story that when a cargo of maize arrived from Russia in the port of Kotor and the Montenegrins were told they could go down and fetch it, they asked if it were "shelled" (taken off the cob). When told that it was not they answered "Let them take it back to Russia. We can get it already prepared from Austria."

The most glorious time of Montenegro was during the reign of its series of Prince-Bishops. Most famous of these Peter Petrovitch-Njegush—Peter II—by coincidence he began his reign at the age of seventeen, also became as famous for his delightful philosophic writings as for his courage and skill as an administrator. He lies buried high on the peak of Lovchen, overlooking the Kotor Estuary and the port which he always wanted his people to keep. May the barbarians now approaching his last resting place respect his tomb.

Several times in the history of Montenegro was it closely associated with Serbia. Almost every time that Serbia or Russia fought the Turks in these

troublous times the Montenegrins would also rise and fight. They got little enough from it as a rule and were completely forgotten when peace treaties came to be signed. Only towards the end, when Serbia was forging ahead as the Piedmont of Yugo slav liberty, did any friction arise. That was of a personal nature. Prince Nicholas of Montenegro became jealous of the growing strength of Serbia and of the pull it exercised over his own citizens, many of whom wanted a union of the two States. It is probably this jealousy which led Nicholas at the end to make arrangements with Austria which were not to the interest of the South Slav peoples. They lost for him and his dynasty a throne.

Bosnia and Herzegovina may for historical purposes in so brief a sketch be classed together. Green Bosnia differs little from Serbia in its main geographical characteristics and in the earliest days formed part from time to time of one of the greater Serbian States. Then in the twelfth century it was overrun by the Hungarians who forced the capitulation of its noblemen, the landowners, but never seem to have established a direct administration over the province. Later for a brief period Ban Stefan Tvrtko established himself as King of Bosnia and having defeated the Serbian State of the moment conquered Dalmatia and Croatia and brought Herzegovina under his own sway also.

As a result of quarrels between the various Christian sects which met and mingled in Bosnia the way was made easy for Turkish conquest. By 1463 all Bosnia was in their hands and in contradistinction to the Serbian landowners very many of the Bosnian nobles accepted Islam to save their estates. In return they were given special privileges and became loyal servants of Constantinople. As a result of this subservience of the Bosnian leaders these provinces remained Turkish for many centuries.

The modernisation of Turkey has left Bosnia and Herzegovina one of the few remaining places in Europe where old Moslem habits can still be seen. For the Bosnian Slavs who embraced Islam to save their estates and their lives clung to that faith long after the political need to do so had ceased. Nevertheless early in this century the economic dissatisfaction of the Christian landworkers employed by the Moslem owners, united with the growth of national feeling stimulated by Serbian propaganda, did lead to considerable pro-Slav feeling in these provinces. With her eye on a link between herself and Montenegro and the sea beyond, Serbia watched the growing tendency of the Turks to retire from Bosnia with envious eyes. But just when Serbia hoped to profit from this withdrawal Austria stepped in in 1908 and annexed the two provinces to herself. This did not succeed, however, in crushing out the growth of

pan-Slav feeling. Rather did the dissatisfaction with the constitution granted the newly won provinces by Austria add fuel to the fire and prepare the revolt which was so soon afterwards to set fire to the whole of Europe.

South Serbia, as the Yugoslavs rechristened that part of Macedonia which was handed over to them as a result of the Balkan Wars and the World War, is another tremendous problem. It includes a mixed population of Serbs, Croats, Bulgars, Macedonians (if it be granted that such an animal exists), Albanians, Kutchuviks, Greeks and even a few real Turks as opposed to Slavs of Moslem faith. For a brief spell, during the tenth century, it belonged to the great Bulgarian Empire of that day, but for most of its history it was attached first to the great Serbian Empires, some of which had their capital at Skopje, and later to the Turkish Empire.

When Turkish power began to wane just as national feeling in the Balkans was at its height, there was a rush by Greeks, Turks, and Serbs to win over by their propaganda the people of Macedonia. Schools, Churches (each of them, Greek, Bulgar and Serb, had its own separate branch of the Orthodox Christian Church), economic organisations, banks, co-operative societies, etc., all were used in this great effort. The agents of rival powers were murdered ruthlessly where possible. So intense was this



propaganda that the three sons of one man, who had each been to a different school, actually claimed each a different nationality—one Serb, one Bulgar, and one Greek—while the father himself claimed to be “Macedonian.” All the propaganda in the world, however, cannot change the basic facts of the situation. The mass of the people of Macedonia, with the exception of a fairly solid Albanian population on the foothills of the Albanian mountains, were Slavs of a type which could easily become with slightly different education either Serb or Bulgar. The difference between these two branches of the south Slav race is not great in any case. They are alike in language, religion, history (right to the sharing of many national heroes), and even blood to a great extent. The solution of the Macedonian problem can therefore take the form either of an independent State or of a State dependent on either of the two foster-parent States. Historically Serbia has the better claim to this task, and economically these lands are definitely joined by the Vardar Valley to Serbia.

Such is the brief history of the various lands which were thrown into the melting pot of the European War to emerge in 1918 as one land.

SARAJEVO AND THE WORLD WAR

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### SARAJEVO AND THE WORLD WAR

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It was Vidovdan, June 28th, 1914, and the hot sunshine fell brightly across the narrow streets of Sarajevo. Moslem women, thickly veiled, and Bosnian men in richly ornamented national dress rubbed elbows with Austrian women in their Sunday best and Austrian officials in black coats and striped trousers who thronged the streets. The streets were gay with flags in honour of a royal visit.

Despite all warnings which had been given of the danger of a visit to so strong a centre of Serbian feeling on Vidovdan, when all Serbia mourns the defeat at Kosovo on that day in 1389, of Knez Lazar and the Christian forces by the Turks, the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife were making their official entry into the city that very day. Not only had the authorities refused to heed warnings of the danger, but they did not even take the normal police precautions usual on such occasions. There is indeed ample evidence for the belief that the old Emperor, who disliked the strongly pro-Slav views of his heir,

and who was at that very time seeking an excuse to crush the Serbs before they should become too powerful for him to do so, deliberately exposed the Archduke to danger.

As the Archduke drove slowly along the quays of the city in an open carriage a bomb was thrown by a young Serbian worker Chabrovitch and a number of the Duke's staff were injured. Even so the Duke refused to give up his procession through the town.

As the carriage came to where the Franz Josef Quai (later the Vojvoda Stepa Quai) turned into the Franz Josef Street (later King Peter Street) the Duke changed his plans. Instead of crossing the bridge he decided to turn up the side street. His carriage slowed down for the turn. Prinzip, a nineteen year old student who had been waiting all morning, together with a dozen other conspirators, for a chance to kill the Duke stepped through the crowd and fired two shots. One killed the Duke while the second aimed the boy declared, at a general riding near, fatally injured the Archduke's wife Sofia.

Austrian officers rushed at the boy and beat him so furiously with the flat of their swords that he sicked up the powerful dose of prussic acid he had swallowed. He was to die a lingering death in a prison dungeon. But his shots were the first shots of a world war which was to wreck the Austro-Hungarian Empire and unite the South Slav peoples.

Without any evidence of Serbian blame in the matter the Austrians demanded satisfaction from the Belgrade Government. An ultimatum was issued the terms of which would have enslaved the newly liberated Kingdom completely. Backed by Russian promises the Serbs refused these shameful terms.

Austria, backed by Germany, hoped by a short, sharp punitive expedition quickly to subdue the Serbs and thereby to end the danger which she saw in the growth of a powerful, independent Serbian State, not only as a neighbour, but owing to its influence over the very numerous Slav citizens of her own territories. The Austro-Hungarian forces moved forward to the attack. The first snag they met was Belgrade, where a few gendarmes aided by students and even schoolboys, held them up until troops could arrive to hold the capital.

Finally the small Serbian army, ill-equipped and worn out by two successive wars in the two preceding years, was forced slowly back into the mountains by the pressure of numerically vastly superior forces better equipped and supplied with a much greater strength of artillery. But when the Austrians thought the battle won Stepan Stepanovitch rallied his tired, broken forces in the Tzer Mountains and made a stand. Even the peasant women of the district did their utmost, carrying munitions, helping to drag heavy guns through the mud, encouraging their

menfolk in every way. The enemy advance was checked and then a series of furious counter attacks broke his ranks. *The victorious Serbs forgot their fatigue and chased the routed army back not merely to the River Sava but many miles beyond into Austrian territory.*

In 1915 the Serbs were putting up a stout resistance against very considerable forces of Austro-Hungarian troops, strengthened by German troops, when they discovered that the Bulgars were massing troops on the border near Nish. The Serbs asked for permission from the Allies to make a sudden surprise attack on these concentrations, which constituted a grave danger to the Serbian flank and rear. The Foreign Office in London preferred to believe the reports of its Minister in Sofia, who was grossly deceived by Foxy Ferdinand, the Bulgar King, and refused to sanction such attacks on the grounds that it was believed the Bulgars were mobilising to come in on our side. The surprise attack came from the Bulgars who thus for the second time within three years struck the Serbs in the back.

Despite furious resistance the Bulgars penetrated the valley of the Nisheva and succeeded in cutting off the Serbian line of retreat down the Vardar Valley to Greece. While the Serbian forces, under this surprise attack from the flank and rear, were forced to retreat before the Austro-German forces, there was

a danger that they would be encircled by Bulgars, working round their right flank and rear, joining up with German forces coming down their left flank through Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Sandjak of Novi Pazar.

A Franco-British diversion was planned from Salonika to try to relieve pressure on the Serbs. It was a hasty and inadequate affair. The most that can be said is that it did draw off a certain number of the Bulgar troops. The lesson of this expedition, which has never been learned, was that if it is decided to help an ally by a landing party, then the help must be given in time and in sufficient force. It has been stated by military experts that if the Franco-British forces which made this forlorn expedition had been as strong as those which were assembled in Salonika only three months later—and there had been ample warning that help would be needed in this quarter—they might have made contact with the Serbs and made the tragic retreat through Albania unnecessary.

The Serbian retreat through Albania was one of the most magnificent epic stories of the last war. One day it will be put into verse and sung, as are the "Lay of Kosova" and the many heroic stories from the days of the great medieval Serbian Empire, to the rhythmic throbbing note of the gusla.

Defeated after months of furious fighting by an

enemy overwhelmingly superior in numbers, having lost the whole of their small supply of artillery, and finally having no ammunition left even for their rifles, the whole manhood of a nation decided that it would not submit, but would withdraw from the country in the hope of living to fight another day. Hundreds of thousands of men, accompanied at the beginning by many thousands of women and children too, set out by two roads—one over the mountains of Montenegro to Skadar (*Skutari*), and the other from Prizren up the valley of the White Drin and over the very peaks of the almost impassable Albanian mountains—to reach the sea. With them went King Peter, aged and infirm, but insisting on going on foot to share the lot of his men, the Crown Prince, also on foot, the veteran leader, Vojvoda Putnik, worn and ill, carried in a wooden box slung on two poles, and the whole of the Government carrying such of the state archives as they could.

Neither troops nor refugees had sufficient food for the journey over the dangerous mountain paths, deep in snow. They were harassed by bands of well-armed brigands and stragglers were robbed and often killed by the hostile Albanian tribesmen. The Albanians refused to give food except for payment at exorbitant prices. When their money was gone the troops had to pay by giving away their clothing garment by garment. Thousands and thousands

marched on, barefoot and naked save for one under-garment, through the snows of the Albanian winter.

Hundreds of thousands died by the way. The road was marked by their corpses, naked and frozen in the snow. At fords and especially steep and dangerous points of the road they lay in thick piles. But starved, naked and frozen, ravaged by dysentery and fever, over 100,000 men won their way through to the sea. With them were some few women and several thousand boys, some of whom were only nine or ten years old. It is interesting to note that many of these boys, despite the incredible privations to which they had been subjected, the physical hardships borne and the horrors they had witnessed, did exceptionally well at British and French universities, carrying off distinctions and prizes in open competition with students who had the advantage of working in their own language.

It was the hundred thousand odd men who survived this heroic exodus who, together with Croatian and Slovene volunteers who deserted from the Austrian army to join them, made the amazing break through the Bulgarian lines at Kajmakchalen in 1918, which marked the beginning of the breaking-up of the Austrian Empire, the beginning of the last phase of the war.

The sufferings of the Serbian troops were not over when they had reached the coast at St. Giovanni

di Medua. It was impossible to embark large numbers of troops from this small port, so close to the enemy naval and aerial bases. A number of supply ships were torpedoed while trying to land food and stores there. Thousands more of the sick, wounded or starving, died while awaiting transport. They were buried in the sand of the seashore.

A curious incident occurred as the ship carrying the body of King Alexander passed this spot eighteen years later. Although some of these skeletons had been washed up and had been reburied by the Italians in 1917, from that year on there had been no sign of any of these graves being uncovered. On the day the *Dabrovnik* with its sad burden passed along this coast there was a tremendous storm. Fishermen found on the beaches hundreds and hundreds of skeletons which the Yugo-Slav consul later identified as those of Serbian soldiers buried there during the war. A Belgrade newspaper published this report under the headline, "DEAD BATTALIONS RISE TO GREET THEIR KING," and added, "The dead heroes and martyrs rose from the Albanian soil to see, on the blue Adriatic, the King's ship, and on its deck the silhouette of the Great Leader. These dead soldiers rose from their sandy graves to greet their King." This is the stuff of which legends are made.

The extraordinary physical endurance of the

Serbian race can best be seen from the fact that after a few days' rest on the coast the greater part of the 100,000 survivors from the Albanian trek marched on down the Albanian coast to Durazzo, where they were taken on board French vessels to Corfu, North Africa, Corsica and other places where training camps were set up and the work of recreating a Serbian fighting force was begun.

Later this Serbian force was transferred to the Salonika front where it joined the Allied armies, consisting mainly of French and British troops, with a few almost useless Italians. The Serbs had the greatest contempt for the Italians, and used to ask one another this riddle :

“ It has feathers, but it's not a bird ;  
It runs away quickly, but it's not a rabbit :  
It carries a gun, but it's not a soldier.  
What is it ? ”

The answer was “ a Bersagliere ”—those picked troops of the Italian army who wear a bunch of cock's feathers on their hats.

The Serbs were highly popular on the Salonika front with all the Allied troops. So much so that Serbian became a sort of international language. A Serbian colonel was vastly amused one day by this incident when a British and a French lorry met

head-on in one of the narrowest alleys of Salonika. One had to go back. The drivers tried talking in English and in French without reaching an agreement. Suddenly the Frenchman shouted in Serbian, "Vi natrag i" (You go back) "Dobro, dobro i" (good, good) replied the Englishman, laughing, and put his lorry immediately into reverse.

In the meantime Serbia was living through the horrors of enemy occupation which lasted nearly three years. It must not be thought that all resistance to the enemy ended with the withdrawal of the Serbian army. There were almost constant risings among the peasants in the more remote districts. These sometimes reached dangerous proportions. In 1916 a large scale rising was started in the Toplitchka district by the famous komitadjı leader, Kosta Pecharatz who was brought from Salonika and landed in the interior of occupied Serbia by a British aeroplane. Although this rising, like all the others, was suppressed with the utmost ferocity and cruelty, reprisals being taken against old men, women and children if the rebels themselves could not be caught, Kosta himself remained at liberty and fighting right to the end of the war.

While the Austro-Hungarian forces occupying northern Serbia lived on the land and were ruthless in their suppression of revolts, their regime was mild and gentle compared with that of the Bulgars

in the south of the occupied country. To make good their claim that this territory should be Bulgarian they deliberately murdered all Serbian teachers, priests and officials. All peasants who refused to call themselves Bulgarian were driven from their land, and thousands of them were killed. Books could be filled with well authenticated cases of terrible atrocities committed by the Bulgars in order to clear the country of all its Serbian elements. It is sad to think that at this very moment those same Bulgarian troops have occupied South Serbia again, a South Serbia which has in the meantime become a land of prosperity and progress under Yugoslav administration. Let us hope that there will be no recurrence of the terrorism which marked their last occupation of this unhappy land.

In the last war, as in this present one, Britain was able to give very little help to her gallant Serbian ally. But, even so, very many friendships were formed during the campaign and memories of hardships shared and of what little help actually did reach them are still very active in Serbia, even to-day, and played quite a part in bringing about the Patriots' Revolt.

The people of Belgrade remember very vividly the half-dozen or so heavy guns which were sent to try to help defend the capital in the early days of the war. They will tell still of the guns at Vrachar

which got so covered with dirt and rubble from the enemies' shells and bombs by day that they had to stop firing, but which Serbs and British worked like niggers to get clear again during the night so that they were firing again in the morning.

They tell many a story, too, of the gallant and jovial Admiral Troubridge and his small band of naval engineers, who taught the Serbs how to float mines down the Danube and to launch torpedoes from the banks in a way which soon made it impossible for the Austrian monitors, which used to bombard Belgrade, to come near enough to do so.

In 1915, typhus broke out among the Austrian prisoners of war and spread rapidly throughout the country. The overworked and underfed Serbian troops and the civilian population were stricken. Hundreds of thousands died. A number of medical missions, organised largely by the British Minister and Lady Paget, succeeded in stamping out the disease and saved the population from extermination.

Wherever you go in Serbia you will find people who will talk to you with respect and affection of the British "sisters" and the doctors who risked death to save their people. Here and there you will find one of the nurses, married usually to a Serbian officer, settled down in the country. In Belgrade itself there were many reminders of the bonds forged during those war years.



There was Dr. McPhail, for instance, that stout-hearted, cheerful Scottish woman who, having served with the Serbs on the Salonika front during the war, settled down to found and run the only children's hospital in Belgrade. With her own money, and what she could raise in England, she kept it going for many years until the Yugoslav government had the funds to take it over. Then she founded a clinic for tubercular children among the Frushka Gora hills.

There was Flora Sands, who went to Serbia during the war as a nurse. When it was decided that conditions were not fit for a woman to work there longer she donned Serbian soldier's uniform, took rifle and bayonet, and stayed on to fight. She was made a non-commissioned officer, and was decorated with the Karageorge Star with Swords, the highest decoration for valour amid a people renowned for their courage. Later she was commissioned, and at the end of the war was put on the Officers' Reserve. Her rank when last I saw her in uniform some years ago was, I believe, that of captain.

There are dozens of similar cases to these where British men and women have won places of the greatest esteem and affection among the Serbian people. Among that small and exclusive band of heroes, the Association of the Holders of the Karageorge Cross with Swords, there are many good friends of this country. One especially has reason

almost daily to tell of his affection for England. He was an engineer who was so badly smashed up during the war that his whole face was lacerated and destroyed. He was saved by immediate attention on the field by the British Red Cross and was brought eventually to England. He was twelve whole years in hospital here, by which time, as a result of a long series of brilliant operations, a new face had been built up for him. It was men like this who could not let their former ally down, and who organised and prepared the Partots' Revolt.

We must not forget the fate during the war of the millions of Yugoslavs who were under enemy rule. The Croats, Slovenes and Bosnians were among the bravest of the Austro-Hungarian troops. When fighting against the Italians, who they considered a racial enemy, they did wonders. It was a Croatian army, with a Serbian general at its head, which routed the Italians at Caporetto.

But when the Slavs of the Empire were fighting against fellow Slavs they were not so reliable. Many thousands deserted on the Serbian front and joined the Yugoslav Legion which was later to play an important role in breaking through on the Salonika front. Still more numerous were those who gave themselves up on the Russian front. Whole units with their officers would move over and surrender at night. They would sing some well-known Slav song, prearranged with the Russian guards, so that

they would not be fired on. The Austrians took every precaution to prevent these surrenders and their own sentries had orders to fire on any troops trying to get into the enemy line. Many thousands of Croats and Slovenes and even more Czechs lost their lives on the Russian front while trying to escape from the German army and join their Slav brothers on the other side.

Some time before war broke out the Croats had lost all the pretences of autonomy which they had managed to wrest from the Austro-Hungarian state. The hardships of war and the increased national feeling to which it always tends to give rise led to the rapid development of a powerful Yugoslav movement among the south Slavs of the Empire. This movement became more and more closely identified with other movements aiming at the eventual union of the Croats and Serbs of the Monarchy with the free Serbs of the Serbian kingdom. Whereas formerly many of the keenest Yugoslav partisans in the Monarchy had directed their efforts to creating a Triune instead of a Dual Monarchy, with the South Slavs and the Czechs as autonomous as were the Hungarians, war conditions, the cruel repression of all suggestions for self-rule by the Slavs, the hanging of deserters and the punishment of the families of those who succeeded in escaping, and the complete suspension of all the political rights of the Slav peoples, convinced

them at last that no solution of their problem was possible within the Monarchy. Instead of seeking their happiness through internal changes, the Slav population began to realise that they could be free only if the Monarchy were destroyed and they formed their own independent Slav state.

On July 26th, 1917, at Corfu, white bearded old Nikola Pashutch, Premier and Foreign Minister of the exiled Serbian Government, and Dr Trumbitch, a Croatian lawyer, who had founded and was then President of the Yugoslav Committee, signed the famous Corfu Declaration—the first official signed document in which the sounding of a great independent Slav state after the war was foreseen.

The Corfu Declaration provided for the union of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in a single free and independent kingdom, on a constitutional and democratic basis, under the Karageorgevitch dynasty. Local autonomy, the free exercise of the three religions (Catholic, Orthodox Christian and Moslem) and the equal maintenance of the two alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic) were to be guaranteed.

In August, 1918, Father Koroshetz, one of the leaders of the Slovene People's Party, who had for years been the favourite of the Empress Zita and one of the family priests of the Habsburg house, became President of the Slovene National Council and took over most of the functions of government. Austria was already failing, and the wise priest saw

that the time had come to leave the sinking ship. Chaos was spreading through the administration of the Monarchy and, by taking over, the Slovenes prevented the danger of disorder and bloodshed among their own people.

To keep events in their approximately chronological order I must make a diversion here and return from the development of the Yugoslav movement inside the Dual Monarchy to the struggles of the Serbs and their allies on the Salonika front.

During the three days, September 15th to 17th, 1918, the Serbs, backed effectively by Yugoslav troops, who had deserted from the Austro-Hungarian army, and by French and British troops, made one of the most amazing break-throughs of the whole war. For many months the Vojvoda Mishitch had been pressing a plan for a break-through on the Salonika front. The British War Office had not been at all keen on the plan, and the French authorities in Paris were very half-hearted in their support. Finally the plan was adopted, not as Mishitch wanted it to be as a chance of smashing the Salonika front and bringing the war to an end, but rather as a chance for securing a partial and local victory.

The break-through was planned to take place on the most formidable part of the Bulgarian-German front, on the steep slopes of the peaks of Kajmakchalan and Dobropolje. The enemy lines ran along the top of a range of bare limestone peaks. The steep

slopes were partly covered in scrub, partly in deep grass, with great bare limestone cliffs rising here and there amid the greenery, a scene of wild and majestic beauty. The attack was made by the Serbian first and second armies, some French home and colonial troops, and some Yugoslav volunteers.

The Serbian Sbursadija division performed incredible feats on the morning of September 15th. They swarmed up the face of these almost impassable cliffs despite heavy rifle and machine gun fire from the defending forces and captured not only the positions they had been detailed to take, but some which the French had failed to take and which might easily have held up the whole advance had they been left. The French were supported with outstanding gallantry by the Yugoslav artillery, which came into action in the open, regardless of danger.

The Bulgars put up a desperate fight. There are no finer troops for hand to-hand fighting in Europe than the Serbs and the Bulgars. The Serbs won their way over the crest, rock by rock, peak by peak, every inch was contested. The final victory, after many positions on the crest of the mountains had been taken and retaken several times during the day, came when the Serbs made a terrific rush in the dark and finally dislodged the enemy from decisive positions.

The Serbian Commander, Voivoda Stepanovitch,

victor of the Tzer in 1914, did not wait for the French to capture all the positions they were attacking, but ordered his pursuit troops to pass through the French line and keep contact with the enemy.

It was one of the greatest emotional moments in the history of the Serbian people when their troops, after being in exile for nearly three years, passed through the ranks of their French allies and set foot once again on their own land. The Serbian troops rushed to kiss their French comrades and then, singing the Marseillaise as they ran, they charged the retreating enemy.

On the second day of the battle the Serbian First Army which had been held up on the left was enabled by successful night operations to throw back the enemy and take important positions. German reinforcements, Saxon Jägers, were thrown into the line.

The third day of this momentous battle led to a gap being made in the Bulgar line. The second Bulgar Division suddenly withdrew and a breach of some thirty miles wide by eighteen miles deep was made. The Saxon troops were forced to retire to prevent their flank being turned.

Within a short time after this great victory the Bulgars asked for an armistice. The broken Austrian forces began a retreat towards their own country, which began in an orderly enough manner but degenerated later into a complete rout. The Serbian troops, on their own soil again and home-

ward bound after so many weary months, pressed forward at an incredible speed. They left their allies miles behind. Military experts have frequently cited with astonishment the speed with which the advance into Serbian territory was made. What they did not realise, perhaps, was the fact that the Serbs had finished their war and were already on their way home. Cases were reported of Serbian soldiers reaching their own villages before the Austrian troops had left them. Single soldiers took prisoner whole detachments of tired, hungry Austrians, or drove them away and let them go home.

On October the 19th a resolution was passed by the Yugoslav National Council at Zagreb, which contained representatives of Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Istria and Slovenia, in favour of the creation of an independent and sovereign Serb, Croat, Slovene State. A few days later, following on Italian victories over the depressed and almost mutinous Austrian troops, the Austro-Hungarian army and empire melted away. On November 23rd the Yugoslav National Council sent delegates to Belgrade to offer the Regency of the Serb Croat, Slovene State to the Crown Prince Alexander, who had already taken over most of the functions of the Crown from his aged and infirm father.

Finally, on December 1st, 1918, the creation of the Serb Croat, Slovene Kingdom was proclaimed, Yugoslavia was born.

## SARAJEVO AND THE WORLD WAR

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But the appearance of this very fine and healthy baby caused little joy among the Allies who had, unconsciously may be, played the rôle of midwife. Certain commitments had been made in the secret Treaty of London in 1915, when Italy had been promised some of the Slav lands in return for her help against Germany. Serbia, it appears, had not been informed of this at the time. As Italy had occupied considerable areas inhabited by South Slav peoples there were complications. Curiously enough, it was Germany who first recognised the new Serb, Croat, Slovène State by an exchange of credentials at the Peace Conference on May 1st. The United States of America followed some time later and Britain and France finally agreed to recognise the new State, mainly as a reward to Serbia for her gallant efforts during the war and as compensation for the terrible sufferings through which her people had gone to pave the way to ultimate victory.

LAND OF SONG AND WINE

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## CHAPTER FIVE

# LAND OF SONG AND WINE

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WHERE is this Yugoslavia? What sort of country is it? What are its people like? These are the questions I have been asked regularly for years. Had the country continued under its first name of Serb, Croat, Slovene Kingdom many people would have remembered the name of Serbia as that of our most gallant ally in the last war. But this triune name was too long for convenience and the name Yugoslavia stuck long before King Alexander made the change in the official name of the country in October, 1929.

Let us make a rapid round tour of the country. I will conduct you personally and try to answer all your questions.

Yugoslavia lies on the western side of the Balkan Peninsular and is bounded by the Adriatic on the west, by Austria and Hungary on the north, Bulgaria on the east and Greece and Albania on the south and south-west. It is approximately the same size as Great Britain, some 98,000 square miles, and has a population of just over 15,000,000.

If we enter the country from the north-west we are

in Slovenia, a very mountainous district which covers the south-east slopes of the Alps. This country is not inferior in beauty to Switzerland itself and has the advantage to wanderers like ourselves that its beauty has not been commercialised to any thing like the same extent. Among its finest peaks, excellent alike for mountaineering and for winter sport, are the Triglav, over 9,000 feet high, in the Julian Alps, Stol, in the Karavanka Mountains (over 7,000 feet) and Gnatovetz, in the Kamnik Alps (over 8,000 feet). The mountains are thickly forested and in the higher valleys there are many delightful little hotels, cheap, clean and hospitable, and a number of mountain huts for climbers which are almost free.

The Slovene people are a healthy, sport loving race. The peasants wear green buckskin shorts with brightly coloured shoulder straps, very like those worn by Austrian peasants in the Tyrol. They are great mountaineers and spend most of their week ends climbing or in winter skiing. As early as 1693 a local historian wrote that the peasants of this district "use the most extraordinary objects for descending the snow covered slopes, they mount a stick and come down the slopes as if they were bewitched." For many hundreds of years skis have been the normal means of getting about in these mountains in winter and the people have inherited remarkable skill in their use.

It is interesting that the great authority on climbing in the Slovene Mountains should be an English-woman, Miss Copeland, who, although by no means young now, can still climb with the best of the younger generation, as two young literary men from London, who called to present introductions from members of the PEN Club, discovered to their sorrow. For she got them out on the mountains soon after dawn and dragged them up slope after slope, until their cocktail-rotted insides could stand the strain no longer and they insisted on staying in a restaurant while she went on with her day's climbing.

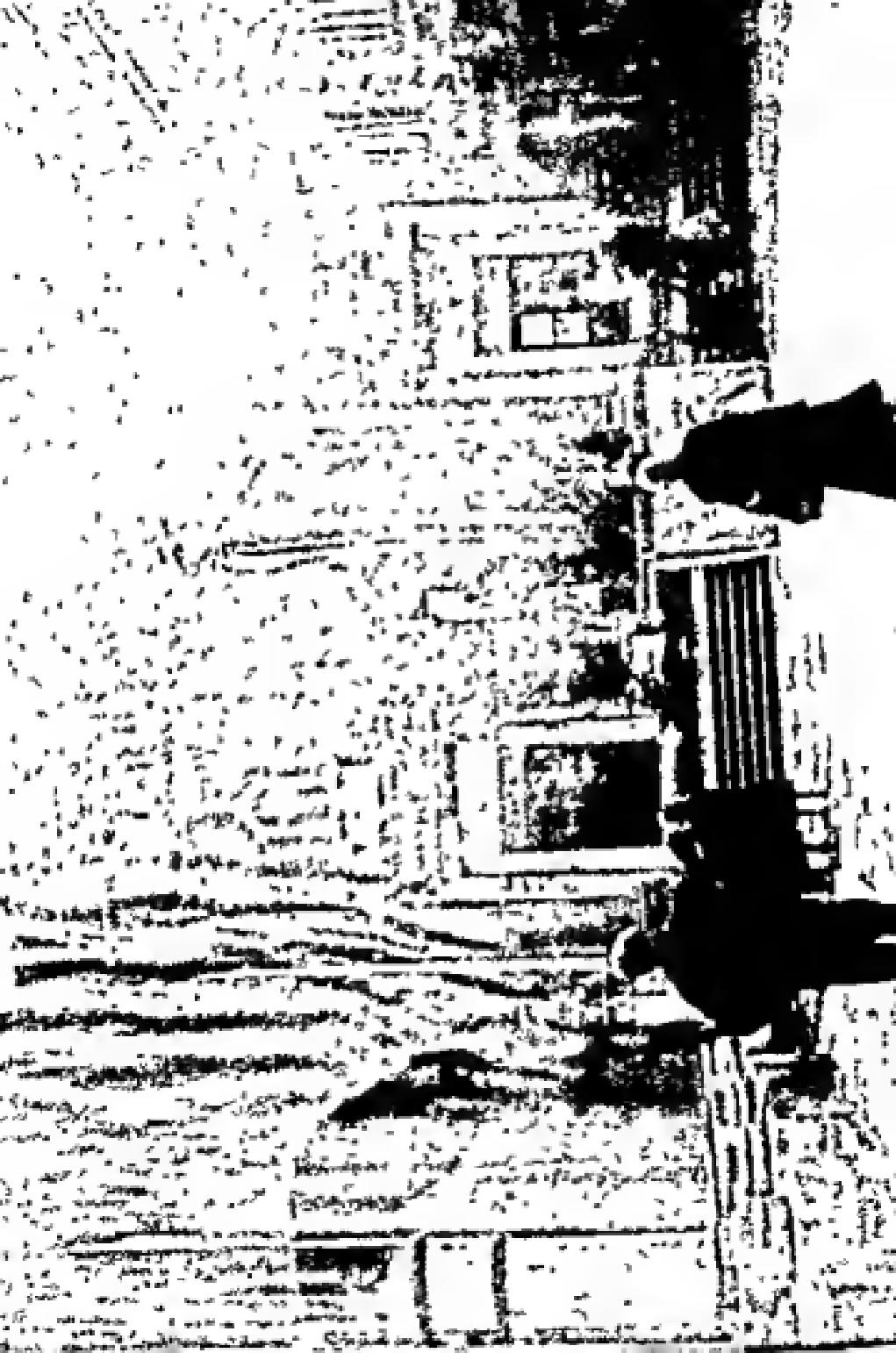
In summer Slovenia is a land of flowers. Nowhere have I seen such lovely wild lilies of the valley as those which the peasant children gather in huge armfuls and sell for a mere song to passengers on the mainline trains. The woods are full too of wild cyclamen, rich in colour and gloriously scented.

The most famous tourist centre of Slovenia is Bled, with its still green lake which mirrors an island church and a stately old castle perched on a high cliff. It is surrounded by forested hills beyond which can be seen the snow-capped peak of the Triglav. Here the Yugoslav Royal Family had one of its summer seats, and the young King Peter was to be seen, rowing on the lake before breakfast, or riding up into the hills on his favourite horse. Bled has fine and well conducted hotels and attracts a large public, not only from Yugoslavia, but from Vienna

and Budapest. In winter it is a great centre for skiing and for skating on the lake. In summer there is bathing and sailing, excursions into the mountains and forests all around, and at night, dancing at the lake side cafés, torch light processions in gondolas across the lake or romantic rambles through the moonlit glades, where the scent of a thousand herbs and flowers rises like incense as you crush them beneath your feet.

Higher up, on the way to the great waterfall which marks the source of the River Sava, is the wild, dark Bohinska Lake. Unlike the warm green waters of sunny Bled, the deep, black water of Bohinska is icy cold, fed from the glacial waterfall. Here, in a small villa amid the pine trees, Prince George became engaged to Princess Marnoz. Here peasant girls from the mountains crowned the bride-to-be with sweet scented wreaths of mountain flowers and sang the wild love songs of the hills beneath her balcony. And here the Prince astonished all the local people by his hardiness and got away for once even from his own police escort by rushing, shouting, every morning into the muddle of the icy lake where no one else cared to follow him.

Food in Slovenia is good, especially cheeses and other milk products, the delicious mountain straw berries in season (and they have the longest of seasons in Slovenia), and tiny chickens, cooked on spits over charcoal. The local wines are excellent, somewhat



after the Moselle type, but very dry, and for those who like them there are very powerful spirits, distilled from apples, pine kernels, and other specialities, at ridiculously low prices. The Slovener men always carry flasks of these powerful spirits when they go into the mountains—which accounts perhaps for the very many jolly drinking songs which they have.

One of the peculiar features of the country is that almost every hill top, and it is one of the most mountainous districts in Europe, is crowned by a church. The people are strongly Catholic and the standard of education is high. In fact, Slovenia has the highest percentage of literacy in the whole country. It has also the highest percentage of illegitimacy. There is a tradition, for which I must say I have found little grounds personally, that the Slovenes are quarrelsome. This has given rise to the story of the Slovener who had lived many years in Croatia, lost his accent and passed as a Croat. When on the point of death he called the priest and said : “ Father, I have something dreadful to confess.”

“ What is it, my son ? ” said the priest. “ I am certain it is nothing very serious.” “ Yes it is, Father—I am a Slovener.” The priest seemed taken aback. Then he replied, “ Well, my son, that is not a sin. But it isn’t nice.”

From Ljubljana we might fly down to the coast at Sushak. We have to pass over high ranges of thickly forested mountains. Then suddenly the sea of green

gives place to the deep, deep blue of the Adriatic. We land on one of the most scarsoone aerodromes in Europe, a tiny patch of green amidst a vast desert of limestone rock, pitted and cratered as though by some gigantic barrage.

To do the trip down the Dalmatian coast properly I would like to take you in a private yacht, nosing into every tiny port and creek, exploring the quaint old churches and ruined palaces, staying long enough to bathe from every one of the thousands of variedly attractive beaches, to taste the different wines of the different districts, to eat all the many types of delicious fish, and sample the many sorts of grapes and the rich, ripe figs, warm from the sunny trees. We should get brown from head to foot, with that rich warm yellow golden brown which is peculiar, I think, to the western Adriatic. Alas, it would take too long. We must be content, like the veriest trappers, with calling hurriedly at a few of the main ports only.

Sushak, a teeming, busy port which was once a suburb of Fiume brings bitter memories. While Sushak cannot handle quickly enough all the trade passing through its crowded docks, and is packed densely on a tiny strip of coastal plain below the historic castle of Trsat—the once busy port of Fiume lies idle, grass grows in the railway tracks along its fine harbour. Cut off from its hinterland by the dog in the manger like greed of D'Annunzio and his Italian pirates, it is slowly dying while the shipping which

might bring life to its magnificent docks is packed along the makeshift wharves of overcrowded Sushak.

From Sushak the Croatian Coast stretches south almost to Shibenik. High barren limestone mountains cut off the coast from the interior, leaving only a narrow coastal strip. But all along this coast is a thick fringe of islands, differing vastly in character, but almost all charming in their various ways. For one thousand years, the Hungarians boast, this coast was theirs. But the people are pure Croatian. A hotel proprietor at Tzrkvenitza told me that some years ago a Hungarian nobleman, staying at the hotel, called him and assured him angrily that the chambermaid had insulted him. It appears that he had spoken to her in Hungarian and she had "pretended not to understand." As this land had been Hungarian for one thousand years this, he said, was impudence. But on investigation it proved that she, like all the Croatian peasant girls of the district, had never known a word of the Hungarian language.

We might stay a while at Tzrkvenitza, a rather sophisticated resort with first class hotels, which brings soft, fine sand from Ultzinj, on the Montenegrin coast, to spread on its own rather coarse shingle. But I think we should have more fun at Novi, nearby, where we should find Serb and Croat company instead of people from Vienna and Budapest, and be able to watch or dance "kolos" at night, amid the flowering oleanders, as well as one-steps and waltzes.

The island of Rab is one of the most delightful places in Europe. It has fine sandy beaches, thick, shady fir woods, olive groves, vineyards and fine fig trees. From the town of Rab, with its picturesque old churches, standing high on a rocky peninsula, covered with agaves, and its quaint old palaces with coats of arms over every doorway, there are many attractive excursions to be made. Best of all is to take a sailing boat for the day, lunch off fish just brought in from the sea and grilled before your eyes over a charcoal fire and washed down with copious draughts of the excellent local wine. Then on to bathe from one of the many tiny coves with soft sandy floors coming right up to the steep rocks from which you can dive into twenty feet of clear, warm water. Return in the evening to the town, gay with lights, with music to be heard from every cafe—Yugoslav, Russian, Gypsy, Hungarian at your choice—and dancing if you wish it in the scented gardens 'neath the blue velvet, starlit skies. Be careful of the "proshek"—the heavy, sweet, full-flavoured dessert wine of Dalmatia, redolent of the sun-dried grapes from which it is made. The white is like bottled sunshine, the red like a mellow flame—but they both tend to rob the legs of their use before they have any but the most beneficent effects upon the head.

As we leave Rab, reluctantly, crowds of gay young people, in a kaleidoscopic array of bathing

costumes and beach pyjamas, wave us good-bye. But at the next port of call, and every other all the way down the coast, similar throngs of bronzed, athletic people will welcome us as the ship comes in and wave as we leave.

As we pass down the coast we shall see Zadar (Zara) another of the Italian thorns in the Yugoslav flesh. At night the town is illuminated so that it looks like a great and exceedingly flourishing port. Actually, cut off from its purely Yugoslav hinterland, the town is dying. It has become nothing but a resort of smugglers and political plotters.

The cathedral of Shibenik makes it worth-while passing up the narrow artificial canal into the wide, landlocked harbour of the port. Here there are some fine relics of Venetian influence at its best. The fortress which guards the entrance is in itself a thing of beauty. The cathedral has some of the finest carvings of the whole coast. The town is a thriving port, in danger of becoming too-industrialised as the enormous power of the nearby Krk waterfalls is developed and the production of aluminium, artificial fertilisers and other chemical products increased. But as you walk through the hot and dusty streets of the old town in the right season you will hear on every hand the tap, tap, tap of the women and children as they crack almonds in the shade of their courtyards to prepare them for market.

Split, probably the greatest of the Yugoslav ports,

plays many rôles. Besides being an industrial centre and a port, it is a thriving holiday resort and contains some of the most interesting historical remains in the Adriatic. It is the railhead of the line which runs via Knin and Ogulin, through the Lika Mountains, to Zagreb. The Lika people are a race of tall, powerful mountaineers, very closely akin to the Montenegrins. Many of them have settled in central Dalmatia on the coast so that whereas on the Croatian coast there are practically nothing but Catholics, in the centre the people are mixed Catholic and Orthodox, and in the south Orthodox predominate.

It is from its Lika blood that Split gets its race of tall athletes, with enormously broad shoulders and practically no hips, for which it is famous. They excel at swimming and water-polo, at rowing and sailing, and even, having beaten a British Fleet team at water-polo by thirteen to nil a few summers ago, they took them on at football and beat them again. They are also famous for their beautiful songs, one of the best known of which runs : " What is desolate London compared with the beautiful town of Split ? "

The old town of Split is built in most interesting fashion inside the remains of the magnificent palace which Diocletian built at the end of the third century, and to which he retired to spend the last days of his life. Most of the old gateways remain, and here and there among the nondescript houses of the town

marvellous classical pillars and delicate wide-flung arches still tell of the grandeur which even the squalid additions of many centuries cannot destroy. Inside the town is a well-preserved and beautifully-proportioned peristyle of the ancient palace, which is made more interesting, but is æsthetically marred, by a gigantic statue of Gregory of Nin, by Meshtrovitch, which was placed there, it is believed, by the orders of King Alexander.

Those who are interested in ancient Roman remains will find at Solina, a few miles from Split, one of the most interesting Roman cities extant. But that is the joy of Dalmatia—it provides things of interest for every possible taste. There is excellent trout fishing to be had from several centres, sea fish can be caught almost everywhere, including enormous tunney in great shoals. There is bathing from every possible type of beach, rocks, shingle or sand, sunny or shady, lonely or populous. At Makarska there is that rare combination—forest and sea, for the pine woods run down to a vast sweep of softest sand. When you get tired of the grilling sun you can lie in the thick shade and cool off, helped by "baths" of iced wine with soda. It is even possible in one place to bathe in the warm waters of the Adriatic and then take a car into the mountains and practice winter sports thousands of feet above sea level on the same day.

For the historian there are relics of Rome, Venice,

Byzantium and the Turk. For those who find beauty in immensity, there is a grandiose beauty of the Kotor Fiord, winding its way through the mountains to the very foot of Lovchen, the fortress-mountain of Montenegro on whose peak lie the remains of Peter Petrovitch Njegush, poet and philosopher, last of the great Prince Bishops of Montenegro. For those who love the beauty which time gives to well placed stone there is the miniature perfection of Dubrovnik, with its exquisite old monasteries, its palaces and its all-encircling fortifications.

The farther south you go, once past Dubrovnik and Tzavtat, the less chance there is of finding good hotels, for the Montenegrin inhabitants of this part of the coast, while possessed of great hospitality and sterling qualities in other directions, have no commercial sense and are not good as hotel keepers. It is still worth the risk of discomfort to go to see the quaint towns like Budva and St. Sijepan, built out on tiny peninsulas, jutting right out into the sea and almost cut off at the isthmus from the land. For those who like their bathing warm there is no better bathing than that of Budva and Ultzinj with their enormous sweeps of sun-baked sands. At Ultzinj, once famous for its pirates, you will find a race of negroes, who speak Serbian and know no other homeland. They are descended from slaves brought back from distant lands. You will also

find a "black" wine which leaves your glass dark purple in colour when you have drained it and shrinks your mouth until you can hardly speak.

Perast, on the Kotor Fiord, was once famous throughout the world for its sailors, who served under the flags of Venice, Austria, Turkey and even Russia as well as doing a lot of free-lancing as pirates on their own account. Now it is almost dead, descendants of its former inhabitants still sail the seven seas, but since the Austrian fleet left the Estuary there is little to keep them at home. Its beautiful old buildings are still a decoration to this most beautiful of inlets.

Kotor, a curious, triangular-walled town on a steep hillside, is full of historic relics. From it a winding, zig-zag road, a marvellous feat of engineering, runs up to Tzetenje, capital of the former Montenegrin kingdom. After scaling the heights this road crosses one of the most desolate of plateaux, a vast field of bare limestone rock, with tiny pockets of soil here and there, hardly bigger than a pocket handkerchief, in each of which a little grain, a potato or a maize plant has been carefully sown. The whole countryside is painfully poverty-stricken.

During the last war a Montenegrin soldier was captured by the Austrians and taken before an officer to be questioned. "You are Montenegrin?" said the officer. "I have been in your Montenegro. It is a poor, barren, desolate land. What on earth are

you Montenegrins fighting for?" "We are fighting for land," replied the soldier "But I have been in Austria. You have wide, fertile, arable land, rich forests and luscious pastures. What are you fighting for?" "We," said the Austrian, drawing himself up to his full height, "are fighting for honour" "Yes," said the Montenegrin reflectively, "everyone seems to fight for what he hasn't got"

The Montenegrins are one of the most interesting people in Europe. Tall, aristocratic looking men, especially handsome in their elaborate national costume, they are good conversationalists, facile linguists and have produced many good poets and writers. But like most warrior races they tend to be lazy content to carry arms and let women carry the burdens. It is said that a Montenegrin just down from the hills was watching some men working in Belgrade. He noticed that while most of the men were digging hard, one was merely watching and making the others work. "How much do these men who are digging get?" he asked. "Tenpence a day," was the reply. "And how much does that one looking on get?" "Oh, he's the foreman. He gets twenty pence a day." "Well," said the Montenegrin, "I'll do his work for their pay," and he got the job.

After the heat and dust of the road the air up in these high mountains is like iced wine. We shall be hungry when we reach Tuzetinje. You must try

some Montenegrin ham, cured first in the sun, then built into a limestone wall and left at least six months. Eaten raw in thin slices it is delicious. It should be washed down by spirits distilled from honey, from plums, or from what is left of the grapes when wine has been made.

The normal way from the south of Dalmatia to the interior of Yugoslavia leads over Popova Polje, one of those curious dishlike plains with mountains all round, usually lakes or marshes in winter, but draining through deep funnel-shaped holes to leave a highly fertile alluvial soil ready for cultivation in summer. It is curious to see the haystacks built either on the tops of tall trees or on stone piles on the raised sides of the "field." All dwellings and barns are built on the hills around the plain also. These plains, together with smaller "pockets" of soil deposited in deep basin-like depressions in the rock, are the only land available for cultivation in the "karst" limestone district which covers large areas of Dalmatia and Montenegro and extends into Herzegovina. These districts are naturally poor, but their hard-working, hard-living inhabitants tend usually to have large families. It is these districts which supplied so many of the emigrants who left annually for America before the quota system began and which now supplies the proletariat which moves down into Yugoslavia's growing industrial centres in search of work.

After skirting the Popova Polje the railway follows the gorge of the Neretva as far as Sarajevo. The Neretva is one of the very few rivers of this limestone district which flows into the sea. Most of them just disappear into huge caverns. The Ombla, on the other hand, appears full grown from a cavern in the mountain side only a few miles from the sea at Gruzh. Even the Neretva has cut for itself so deep and narrow a gorge in the soft limestone that it is not of great use for communications. The railway is cut into the side of this gorge for a great part of its length and has a record number of tunnels and bridges per mile. The depth of the gorge keeps the water of the Neretva icy cold, so that at Mostar which lies in a deep, sheltered, but sunny valley and is the hottest place in the whole country at the height of summer, it is almost impossible to bathe in it. The danger of bathing is increased by the terrific speed of the current. Yet I have seen small boys of Mostar jump from the high arched Turkish bridge which spans the river or from even higher pinnacles of rock and climb out unhurt half a mile or more down the stream.

Mostar is a poor town, yet life there is very pleasant in summer. Excellent local wines are very cheap, lamb or young goat roasted on the spit is plentiful and bread is not dear. There is fine company in the local inn gardens, where poets and musicians meet at night to yarn and sing under the

festoons of fruit-laden vines. Herzegovina has produced far more than its share of poets, and is famous, too, for its "sevdelinkas"—a peculiar and most attractive form of love-song, greatly influenced, I should say, by oriental music.

Sarajevo, capital of the former province of Bosnia, is one of the most oriental-looking towns left in Europe. Here you can still see veiled women in the streets, the poor ones usually thickly veiled and swathed in shapeless, voluminous cloaks, but many of the richer ones in tiny gauzy masks which serve merely to enhance the brilliance of the wearer's eyes. The fez is as common here as the hat, and to add to the strange medley there are also Jewish women wearing strange shaped hats which are meant to represent the ships which brought their ancestors from Spain when they were expelled thence by Izabella and Ferdinand some five hundred years ago.

There are over one and a half million Moslems in Yugoslavia. As it is usual in the Balkans to judge a man's race by his religion they are always referred to in common talk as "Turak" (Turk), but in reality very few of them have any Turkish blood. Some are descendants of landowners in the south who accepted the Islamic faith in order to retain their lands after the Turkish conquest. Others, especially in Bosnia, are descendants of those inhabitants of the medieval Bosnian kingdom who had adopted the Bogumil heresy. Persecuted by the

Orthodox Christians of the Serbian Empire on one side and by the Catholics of the west on the other they became Moslem to secure the protection of the Sultan. All the Yugoslav Moslems have retained their Slav tongue. Since the unification of Yugoslavia they have made great strides from an educational and social point of view. The women of the upper classes have become emancipated and have entered many professions. Bahrija Nuti Hadjitch, a beautiful Moslem girl from Mostar, is one of Yugoslavia's leading opera singers and has starred in opera in Berlin, Paris and Rome. In the villages, especially in South Serbia, the Moslems remain rather backward still.

From Sarajevo there are two main routes to Belgrade. The one is by the main line through Bosnia to Brod, on the Sava, and the other by narrow gauge line via Stalatch. The main line route takes us near to Travnik, amid the green mountains, a district as yet little known to tourists. Here Moslem, Catholic and Orthodox villages are hopelessly mingled. Here in the mountains there are fine slopes for winter sports, but as few people avail themselves of the possibilities it is wise for small parties to carry firearms in order to protect themselves from wolves.

The narrow gauge line goes through Uzhitza, an interesting Serbian town famous for its dried meats (ptshuta), and its spirits, especially its "klekovatcha,"

(a sort of gin, "shlivovitza," distilled with juniper berries,) and its "vishnjevatcha," an excellent cherry brandy made with sour cherries. It was in Uzhitzia that I was driven to throwing hair-brushes and boots through the window in a vain attempt to stop the nightingales singing as they went on so long and so loudly that it was impossible to sleep.

We are now in Serbia proper. The people are not so tall in general as the Montenegrins, but are stocky and powerful. The country is undulating and green, not unlike some parts of England. Everywhere there are plum orchards. Many of the peasants still wear thick, close-fitting suits of homespun of a dark brown colour, and opantzi, soft leather slippers with turned up toes. But the tendency is for costume to die out with increasing rapidity.

. Let us leave the railway for a while and venture south of the line to Vrnjtzia or Vrnjachka Banja. Just as God is said never to have planted a nettle without planting a dock near it to heal the sting, so it would seem He never provides rich foods in plenty without an antidote. Perhaps that is why Serbia, where sucking pig is one of the favourite dishes, and rich people have two meat courses to a meal, followed by gibanitza, a rich dish of cheese and a macaroni-like substance, sandwiched between dried meats in front and sweet cakes full of nuts and honey afterwards, is so rich in mineral springs reputed to heal all the ills the human stomach is heir to.

Vrnjachka Banja is admittedly the best of all these waters. In a well laid-out park are hot springs, good to drink and delightful to bathe in, and cold ones, which can be taken with wine when you are not taking the cure. Here in summer come all the middle aged gourmands of Belgrade, and even farther afield, to prepare themselves for another winter of good cheer.

Back on the railway we soon join up with the main north south line of the Balkan Peninsula, which follow the valleys of the Morava and the Vardar rivers. At Nish this important line is joined by the equally important one which follows the valley of the Nisheva through the mountains to Sofia and was for centuries the main road to Constantinople.

Nish, which lies in a great basin of mountains, is a typical Serbian provincial town. It has developed enormously in the last twenty years, and has now some fine modern buildings in the centre of the town. But just outside the centre you have the cobbled streets, the low, one storey houses built in a series of connected rooms right round a shady courtyard, and in the warm dark nights of the long summer you will come unexpectedly upon groups of young people gathered around the communal taps which have replaced the old village wells, singing the beautiful folk songs and love songs of their people, flirting, match making, and sometimes fighting just as you will find them depicted in some of the exquisite musical plays of Bora Stankovitch.



The Nish district, being on the borderland between Serbia and Bulgaria, and in a district where the Turks dominated for centuries, has kept its national songs the purest and its national feeling the strongest in the whole of Serbia. But, speaking generally, it is in the provincial towns of old Serbia that one feels the virility of the Serbian people. There is so much colour, and music and movement bound up with their national feeling and their political life, so much keen interest in world movements, such vigorous intelligence, that the time must come when the Yugoslav people will again become a centre of culture and progress in the Balkans and Europe.

Near Nish is another of the innumerable "banje" (watering-places) where hot springs of great medicinal value gush with terrific force from the earth. The Romans, who seem to have had a sixth sense for discovering mineral waters and metallic deposits, exploited nearly all of these springs two thousand years and more ago, just as they did also most of Yugoslavia's great mineral wealth. At Nishka Banja you can still take your bath in beautifully planned stone basins made by the Romans. Arriving there one very hot day after a long tramp through the mountains I hurried to bathe. I dived into one of the Roman basins which was not quite so deep as I had thought. I hit my head hard on the bottom. Nothing daunted, I climbed out and was about to dive again when the keeper shouted something. Not

understanding much Serbian at that time I thought it was merely a warning that the bath was shallow. So I dived again to show that I could do it without banging my head. When I climbed out again the keeper took me aside and with infinite patience explained that a number of old men sitting on the steps had been ordered by the doctor to sit for two hours with the warm water up to their mouths. Every time I dived the water rose and they swallowed a mouthful.

A few minutes later their two hours was over and the men, peasants from the district, most courteously came over and begged me now to go on diving. This inherent courtesy and hospitality of the Serbian peasant is amazing. The principle "a guest is always right" is carried sometimes to absurd lengths. At the "slava," for instance, the celebration of the Saints' Day on which a man's family is supposed to have been converted to Christianity, the peasants keep open house for several days. Cases have been known where guests have stayed for a week and have insisted on eating up everything in the house, even the winter stores of dried meats, hams, and preserved vegetables. You cannot enter the house of the poorest peasant in Serbia without being offered immediately hospitality. If nothing else is forthcoming they will bring sugar and water followed by strong, black Turkish coffee.

The whole of this district, Nish, Pirot (famous

also for its beautiful hand-made carpets), Vranja and around is famous for its sour milk, its "kajmak" (a sort of salted Devonshire cream), its cheeses, ("Serbian" cheese is a soft white cream cheese, "katchkavalja" a hard, salt cheese) and its young goats and lambs which are often killed and eaten within a month of birth. Its people are noted for their physical strength and endurance. Relics of their almost perpetual war with the Turks are to be found everywhere. Near Nish there is, for instance, the famous Tower of Skulls, built by the Turks to include thousands of the skulls of Christians killed in battle.



A PLEASANT LAND

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## CHAPTER SIX

### A PLEASANT LAND

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TZAR DUSHAN'S Skoplje, Capital of the Serbian Empire at the height of its culture and glory, fell upon evil days in the last century. When it was liberated in 1918 it was a sordid place, full of dust and flies. To-day it is a modern town with fine large buildings in the centre and a belt of pleasant modern villas on the outskirts. But it retains enough of the orient from its long period under Moslem rule to be interesting still.

There is still an oriental bazaar where you will find craftsmen, wearing the fez, still turning out by hand exquisitely worked ornaments. There are still mazes of narrow streets with high walled gardens and houses with iron grills to shutter the windows lest the womenfolk should be seen by strangers. And if you wander quietly around you will see perchance coming around a corner unaware a pretty young Moslem girl with veil thrown back over her head. But before you can look again there will be nothing to see but the impenetrable blackness of the "yash-mak."

You will see too thousands of gypsy women and children wearing long, loose trousers of gaily coloured silks. Many of them have blue eyes and fair hair, tinted with henna, and may well be rather of Turkish than gypsy origin.

In the Moslem quarter of Skopje and in some of the purely Moslem villages around, on certain great Moslem feast days it is still possible to see the dancing dervishes. The authorities frown upon the practice and it is becoming increasingly difficult to witness it, but it persists. The dervishes sing a curiously monotonous song for hours until they become hypnotised. Then they begin to dance wildly and to slash at themselves with sharp edged little axes. They inflict great gashes upon their heads, and stick long pins through their cheeks. But they lose no blood and within a day or two their wounds heal and they seem none the worse for their ordeal.

From Veles a new railway and road run down over the Ovche Polje to Shtip and Strumitza. This great plain has only recently been reclaimed for agriculture. For centuries conditions of life were too uncertain for any permanent settlement to be possible. Now it is becoming a prosperous and valuable district. The settlement of this area with peasants from densely populated districts in the north presented many difficulties. One of the most serious was malaria of the tropical variety introduced into Macedonia during the war which wrought havoc with

the first settlers. The work of clearing up the whole district and freeing it from the scourge of this dread disease was done so thoroughly under the direction of a Croatian doctor, Dr. Shtampar, that the League of Nations sent him out to China to try to help the Chinese in their struggle against this menace.

A second evil which took still longer to eradicate was the bands of Bulgarian comitadjis who crossed the mountain frontier secretly with bombs and rifles and murdered, threatened and terrorised the population. Finally they too were eradicated, though with German help they will now be back again.

King Alexander, who spent nearly eight years of his youth at war in Macedonia, had a great passion for this part of the country. He devoted much of his time and of his country's money to building roads and railways there, restoring order where there had for many decades been chaos, opening schools and sending doctors, paid and organised as civil servants, to stamp out disease.

At Shtip there was a Moslem monastery, where priests were trained. Here I was greatly surprised when the head of the school served us with great ceremony with a curious pale pink liquid which strongly resembled raspberry juice in appearance. He asked me what I thought it was. I replied "Raspberry juice." "Now taste it," he said. I did and my whole mouth was at once filled with a strong taste resembling, if I may so describe it, the perfume

of roses I asked how it was made but beyond saying it was made from roses and honey the old man would give no indication as its manufacture was a closely guarded secret of the school.

The Strumitza valley has an almost tropical summer. It will grow cotton, is famous for its excellent tobacco, has a thriving silk producing industry, and still uses, alone in Europe I think, camels as normal beasts of burden. It certainly surprised me, some years ago, as I stood beside a broken down car on the road just beyond Strumitza, to see a string of real but rather moth-eaten looking camels go trailing past.

From Skoplje it is easy to get by road or rail to Bitoli, once the chief commercial centre of a great Turkish province, but now stagnant and dying, as it has been cut off from the territory it formerly served. Thence we can reach the beautiful Lake of Ohrid (pronounced Okrid), which lies high up among the mountains in the corner where the Yugoslav, Greek and Albanian frontiers meet.

Ohrid has been described as the "Lake of Living Fossils." It is protected by the Dinaric Alps, which rise to a height of over 8,000 feet to the north of it. This allowed it, alone of all the lakes of Europe, to escape the destructive effects of the Ice Age. Its isolation also protected it later from the inroads of newer and more powerful forms of life. As a result it still contains fish, snails and worms of a type known elsewhere in Europe only by their fossils.

The famous Ohrid trout, which is smoked by a special process by the fishermen, is one of the greatest delicacies I have ever tasted. But its type is found nowhere else in the world as it too is pre-glacial in origin.

Owing to its altitude Ohrid has a most delightful climate. The sun is hot and powerful but the deep waters of the lake, over 1,000 feet deep in many parts, remain delightfully cool. The nights even at the height of summer are cool and pleasant. The water of the lake is soft and pure, most transparent of all the European lakes, its beaches are long stretches of smooth, fine sand. Small wonder that one of the most beautiful songs of South Serbia describes the singer's ambition to "own a small shop in Struga, and sail a silken-sailed shallop on Lake Ohrid."

It is not only to the hydro-biologist that the Ohrid district is of interest. It is a great centre for archaeologists also. Whereas in the greater part of the classical world captured by the barbarians the newcomers settled down in the cities and settlements of the former inhabitants and obliterated all trace of them or overlaid them thickly with their own buildings and refuse, in the Balkans the new-comers were mainly fierce nomad tribes who had no permanent dwellings. The cities of the ancient civilisations were gradually covered by rotting vegetation and the dust of storms, with a thick, protective layer of earth. But once that layer is removed the ruins

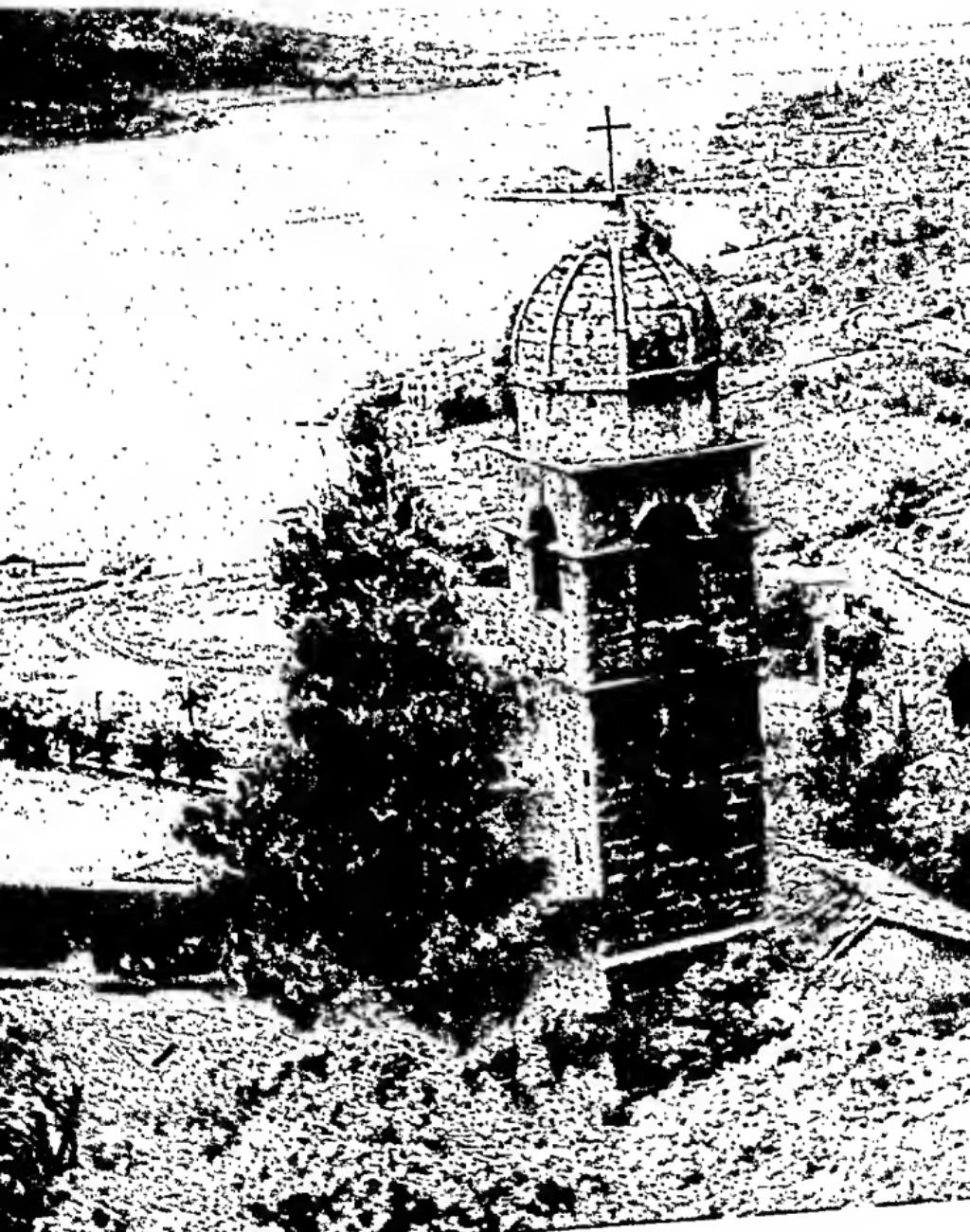
## THE SOUL OF YUGOSLAVIA

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of the old cities, rich with traces of their former inhabitants, are found to be in much the same state as they were left two thousand years ago and more. As the Balkan peninsula has been a constant scene of wars, invasions and conquests ever since, little work has yet been done on these rich sites, which have thus been protected for modern scientists.

At Trebenishta, near Ohrid, Professor Vulitch, of Belgrade University, discovered a number of graves containing many golden ornaments and richly inlaid arms. He named the site the "Valley of Kings", but a few years later was forced to change the name as further research disclosed more graves containing ornaments obviously intended for the use of women, together with fine Greek bowls and vases for cosmetics. Other graves nearby seem by the contents of bronze and iron to have been those of the servants of the high born Illyrian Princesses. In one of these were found bronze forceps which Professor Vulitch believes to have been used for plucking the mistress's eyebrows.

Not far away at Stobi a whole Greek settlement in remarkably good state of preservation is being excavated under the control of Professor Petkovitch. Exquisite mosaics have been discovered in the ancient palaces and in an early Christian church, some fine statues and beautifully carved capitols have been found in a huge marble amphitheatre capable of holding over five thousand people, and numerous



AN OLD CHURCH ON THE KOTOR FIORD

tools used in spinning and weaving found in a large building with many rooms are believed to denote an ancient Greek textile factory.

Ohrid is rich too in beautiful national costumes and it is from this district that some of the finest national embroideries come. Here, too, the peasant people have retained many of the fine old dances which their ancestors danced and some of the most haunting songs which they sang. The whole Balkans knows the song of the saucy Biljana, bleaching linen on the shores of Lake Ohrid and threatening the wine merchant that if his caravan runs over her linen he will have to pay and that she will not take payment in wine or rakija as he offers but in "*that handsome young fellow in the fez, who is driving the first cart.*"

To the north-west of Skoplje lies a district which is peculiarly full of the monuments of Serbian history. Here are to be found dozens of monasteries, some of them gems of Byzantine architecture, many of them containing frescoes of great beauty. They were founded by the Serbian Emperors, Princes, and Despots of the Middle Ages.

Leaving Skoplje by car we should soon reach Prizren, one of the most picturesque of South Serbian towns, with its dozens of minarets and its long line of dark Lombardy poplars. A few years ago, I have not been there of late, the girls of Prizren, Christian as well as Moslem, all wore heavy, baggy trousers of

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rich coloured silks, caught tight round the ankles with embroidered spats. The night we arrived the mayor of the town, who had been in America, heard that there were English folk at the local inn. He insisted on our being his guests and sent his man to bring a few bottles of his own special wines. The food, sucking pig roast on a pole over a fire of vine twigs, was excellent and the wines even better. I remember my companion, an English painter come to study the old monasteries, saying as we got up next morning, "Have you noticed, Harrison, how these Yugoslav beds turn round three times before you go to sleep!"

As we go through Djakovitza and run along the foot of the steep, barren mountain ranges which mark the Albanian frontier, you will notice large numbers of Albanians. After the defeat of the Serbs at Kosovo many of the Serbian landowners fled the country. The Moslem Albanians came down from their barren mountains and occupied the empty lands. They are picturesque people, tall and slim with long and often noble looking heads. They wear tightly fitting trousers of white homespun cloth, elaborately braided according to the clan to which they belong, brightly coloured silk cummerbunds and braided homespun jackets. They are all Moslem and their women folk still go heavily veiled and cloaked.

It is the custom in this part of the country, especially among the Albanians, for a young man to have to

buy his wife. Prices are so high that the only way in which they can earn the money is to go away from home to work for a few years. Many of them go to Belgrade and other big towns and earn their living by sawing wood and doing other heavy work. They eat remarkably little, a crust of bread, a bunch or two of grapes, some dried figs, a few cobs of boiled maize according to season. Rarely do they eat meat. Yet they do a heavy day's work. All the money they earn they send home.

As it is the custom in the north of Yugoslavia, where Austro-Hungarian customs still prevail, for a girl to need a dowry before she can marry, it occurred some years ago to a Belgrade merchant that he could do well by supplying girls without dowries with husbands, and young men from the south who had not the money to buy wives with women at the same time. He had such success that before long he was exporting large numbers of girls from the Vojvodina to South Serbia. But this smacked of white slave traffic to the authorities and the business was forbidden. Also it was found that the girls from the north were not used to the heavy manual labour in the fields done by the women of the south, who are costly mainly because they are hard workers and potential producers of more workers for the land.

Just past Djakovitza is the monastery of Visoko Dechani, one of the best preserved and most beautiful of all the medieval Serbian monasteries. It stands

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in a well wooded valley running up into the Albanian mountains. Just behind the monastery is a stream crossed by a bridge made of a single log and near the end of the log is a strong spring of highly mineralised water, sparkling and of fine flavour, which flows into the stream and is lost.

In this same neighbourhood are the Patriarchate of Peć, for many years the centre of the Orthodox Church in Serbia, and the Monastery of Grachancica on Kosovo Field, architecturally the finest of the medieval monasteries and famous as the church where King Peter and his officers gave thanks to God after their victory over the Turks in 1912. Studenica, further to the north, is the monastery at which many of the most famous of the Serbian Emperors were crowned. It was said that King Alexander, who was actually never crowned officially as King, planned also to be crowned on this historic spot.

Like most of the other monasteries of its period Studenica had a magnificent lot of frescoes giving much of the history and legend of the period. Unfortunately their delicate faded colours did not appeal to two Russian monks who had come there to study art. So while the Archimandrite was away they decided to give him a pleasant surprise by reviving and strengthening the old frescoes. They painted them all over with glaring modern colours not too accurately applied and ruined over half of the frescoes before the Archimandrite returned and stopped them.



THE RBD R AT INDORE H.

Here too we saw a magnificent ikon, painted on wood, showing St. George slaying the dragon, an excellent example of the best Byzantine work. But the head had been almost completely worn away by pious worshippers who, in accordance with Orthodox custom, kissed the ikon on entering and leaving the church.

Our journey takes us now through the very heart of the Shumadija, cradle of the modern Serbian State. We pass through Kragujevatz, the biggest Serbian arsenal, to Topola, where Karageorge lived, raised the standard of revolt, and is buried, in a striking marble church erected by King Peter the Liberator, grandfather of the present King. King Alexander completed King Peter's church and had it decorated inside with remarkable frescoes, many of which are copies of famous frescoes from the medieval Serbian monasteries, carried out by Russian artists in mosaic. He also built a modest dwelling in old Serbian style for himself and created a museum in the one remaining tower of the old fortress of Karageorge.

The slopes of the gentle hills around Topola are covered with vineyards, some of the finest of which were planted by King Alexander himself. The wine is made and sold by a co-operative organisation of the peasant growers. In its books King Alexander appeared as plain Mr. Alexander Karageorgevitch, member No. 1.

From Topola we go by the old Constantinople road,

along which the Sultan's messengers used to dash, with relays of horses every few miles, at record speed to the Turkish capital, to Mount Avala, which over looks Belgrade. The road winds through a country side rich in vineyards, plum orchards, maize and wheat fields and fodder crops. There is no natural pasture here summer is too hot and dry, winter too intensely cold for grass to do well. The peasants all wear costumes of brown homespun cloth, braided with black, and 'opankas, soft leather shoes with upturned toes.

When first I climbed to the peak of Avala it was topped by the magnificent ruins of an ancient castle, built according to local legend, by the medieval Serbian Princess, Despot Yerina the Damned. There was much of interest to the archaeologist in these ruins. For instance, there was a spiral channel running through the thick walls from the lowest to the highest parts of the remaining walls. There were holes at intervals on the inside wall giving access to this channel, which is thought to have been either a system of primitive central heating or a clever arrangement by which cannon balls stored at the top of the castle could be sent down rapidly to defenders on any level beneath.

Much to the chagrin of many of the people of Belgrade, this ancient monument was swept away at the order of King Alexander to make room for a huge monument to the Yugoslav Unknown Soldier,

designed by Meshtrovitch. But no one had anything but praise for the construction of a fine main road leading to the summit of the mountain and the planting of one million five hundred thousand trees, brought from all parts of Yugoslavia, in memory of the 1,500,000 men from all parts who laid down their lives for the liberation of Serbia and the unification of Yugoslavia, during the Great War. There is also a fine hotel built in pure old Byzantine style. Here on summer evenings there is always a cool breeze and here come "the elite of Belgrade society" (those with cars at their disposal at the moment) to drink iced wine from the King's vineyards and eat crisp, crackling, roast sucking-pig and huge pickled paprikas, to the accompaniment of stirring, haunting songs culled from all parts of the country and sung to the strumming of the guitar.

It is with dark bitterness in my soul that I write at this moment of Belgrade, the fair White Fortress dominating the junction of the Sava and Danube rivers which, in its tumultuous history, has been captured and recaptured half a hundred times, and throughout the "Dark Ages" has seen massacres and pillage by Turks and Huns as the tide of barbarian invasion swept this way and that. But never in its long history has it been subjected to such unspeakable barbarity, such uncalled for slaughter of its women and children, such pagan horrors of wanton destruction, as in this year of disgrace 1941,

and at the hands of the "Christian" Germans Alas, I must write of Belgrade as of the past, for the Belgrade I knew and loved is a worse shambles than ever Warsaw was, and the rotting corpses of its fine, decent people lie thick about its shattered streets, dumbly appealing to whatever gods there be for a vengeance which will, I hope, one day be theirs.

Let me tell you of the Belgrade that was. It had little appeal to the tourist. There were few imposing buildings, its cabarets were second rate, its imported champagne expensive and bad, there was no aristocratic society to flatter the visitor by inviting him into its select circles. Belgrade, typical of the Yugoslav people, was a bad showman. It disdained propaganda. The real Belgrade was the Belgrade of its own people, and the few foreigners who penetrated to its hospitable heart.

Life in this Belgrade was full of colour, form, music—beauty in all its manifestations—available to the whole people, even the very poorest. For fivepence—students half price—you could see a first-class opera, one of the best Russian ballets in Europe, drama which would put to shame the acting and the choice of plays of many a bigger capital. Shaw, Galsworthy and Shakespeare figured weekly on the show bills of the State Theatre, but Shakespeare was played to crowded houses as thrilling modern drama or rollicking comedy, and not as a sacred relic from a distant past. There were operas, ballets and plays

chosen from the best in every country of Europe, as well as some fine music, dancing and plays, the work of modern Yugoslav artists. Best of all I liked the peasant plays with the singing of folk-songs.

For the price of a Turkish coffee ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. or 2d.) you could sit half the night in almost any of the four hundred odd cafés which had music. You could choose a Russian balalajka orchestra, Bulgarian gypsies, Rumanian gypsies, Hungarian gypsies or gypsies from Shabatz who sang all the finest Yugoslav songs, and had sometimes voices of the most intense and beautiful purity of tone. There were girl singers from Bosnia, "damen kapela" from over the Sava, dance bands of every kind and colour, discreet quartets of fine artists, students' orchestras whose members studied by day and played by night; there were singers and musicians from Macedonia, from the Vojvodina, from Slovenia, Croatia and Dalmatia, each with its own colourful and picturesque costumes and its own special types of song and dance. In winter the cafés were warm, their double doors and windows keeping out the icy "koshava" wind; in summer they were out-of-doors, on street pavements, in courtyards, in gardens shaded by high trees or on the terraces of the Kalimegdan Park, which took the place of the ancient fortress.

In a thousand other cafés, small and large, there was no music but people gathered to talk, for conversation is no lost art in Yugoslavia, where the

people have still the keen intellectual virility which marked earlier periods in our own social and literary life. Politics, philosophy, art in all its phases, the literature of a dozen lands were all discussed with keen wit, wide knowledge and deep interest. The plans of Hitler to swallow Austria, then Czechoslovakia, then Poland, and finally to challenge France and the British Empire were commonplaces in the cafés of Belgrade in 1937, long before they had been noticed by any but a few keen observers in Paris and London. Unfortunately the Belgrade government at that time was ruled by a small clique which isolated itself from the wisdom of its cafés and its people.

The markets showed in their season that Belgrade was essentially an ordinary man's town. You could rarely if ever get fruits and vegetables out of their season. But in season there was such a plethora that prices were ridiculous. Tomatoes at the height of their season were less than ½d. per lb., the most delicious lettuces fetched 1d. for four, eggs fell at times to twenty-eight a shilling, excellent bread cost only 1d. a pound. It was a real delight to go to market to see the immense piles of glowing scarlet paprika, the rich purple egg plant, the mountains of dark green water melons—one or two cut through to show the ripe wine red of their centres—and the smaller piles of green and golden melons of the most entrancing variety. Never have I eaten such melons

as the small, scented, richly flavoured "pineapple" melons we bought for 1d. or 2d. each. Nowhere have I known strawberries to have so long a season, save in Slovenia, so that we got sick of eating even the scented, fully flavoured wood-strawberries, which cost us about 3d. per lb. Cherries too were magnificent, large black fleshy ones or the bright red, translucent "sour" cherries. But of all the many delightful fruits with which the market was piled, with each in its due season, none could compete with the grapes, sun-ripened, sugar-sweet, blood-red Malaga, wine-black Hamburger, golden-yellow Smederevo and a dozen sorts besides.

In summer, for those who could not get away from Belgrade, although travel was cheap enough on the State railways, there was excellent bathing in either the Danube or the Sava. The Danube was faster, cooler and less attractive than the warm, green, translucent Sava, but it was cheaper and easier to get to it. The banks for miles on either side of both rivers were lined with golden-brown bathers—lying in the blazing sun until they could bear it no longer and then sliding for a while into the cool, swift-flowing waters. "He who drinks of the water of the Sava will return," runs the Serbian proverb. I hope it may prove true.

Food also was cheap, even in the restaurants. For a few pence you could get a plateful of "chivapchiche" (little sausages without skins made

of minced meat and grilled over charcoal), ' rasnici, bits of veal on skewers or one of the many other specialities of the ' chivapchicar ' All these grilled meats were served with raw, chopped onion and huge pieces of delicious crusty bread In the best hotels you could get good French, German or Hungarian cooking, but the best cooking in Belgrade, as in most places in England, was the good simple cooking of the ordinary housewife. That was delicious

It would not do to leave Belgrade without a mention also of its drinks Wine was the normal drink of the greater part of the population of Belgrade. It was cheap and good. It could be obtained in bewildering variety, not only every district but almost every merchant had a different set of wines, and even from the same merchant you rarely got quite the same wine for long There was, unfortunately, no standardisation. Best among the common wines were those from Frushka Gora, from Smederevo (especially the whites) from Negotin (the black') from the Zhupa district, from Dalmatia, and from Slovenia. The best spirits came from the Uzhutza district, but every peasant seemed to distil some sort of rakiya for himself In the ordinary little cellars in Belgrade where ' rakiya ' and dried meats were sold it was usually possible to get at least eighteen distinct varieties of spirits The normal price was a penny a glass and a hard headed, whisky

drinking friend who once tried one glass of each of the eighteen varieties at a sitting got himself completely and hopelessly inebriated for his 1s. 6d.

Such then was Belgrade, no place for snobs, but a town where an ordinary man could live fully and pleasantly even on a most modest income. All attempts by foreign diplomats and their hangers-on to create artificially a Belgrade "society" have broken down owing to the essential democracy of the Serbian people. King Alexander realised the strength of this feeling when he declared, "there remains only the King and the people." It is the natural and healthy state of affairs in a land where over eighty per cent of the people are still peasant farmers tilling their own land and where every state official, every professor of the university, every officer of the army, has brothers and other kin still working on their own bit of land.

The essentially democratic nature of the people of Yugoslavia is best illustrated by their educational system. No private schools are allowed, all children must pass the state examinations, otherwise they are shut off from the civil service, employment in banks and other similar institutions, the liberal and medical professions, etc. To take these examinations privately means ten times as much work and much more expense than taking them from a state school.

School fees are based like income tax on the income of the parents. A very poor parent pays no

fees, a very wealthy one pays quite stiff fees for the same education. Once elementary education is over the brilliant children of poor parents get not only scholarships covering their books and fees but maintenance while at school. From the higher schools every child who passes out has the right to a scholarship to the university if the parents cannot afford to send it at their own expense. Thus no clever child need be deprived of educational facilities because of the poverty of its parents.

There is no part of Yugoslavia where the people are not hospitable. In Belgrade however this hospitality became almost too much of a good thing at times. In a tiny village where almost every family seems to have been converted to Christianity on a different Saint's Day, the "Slava" is a very pleasant institution giving the rest of the village an excuse for visiting the house where the "slava" is, and taking food and drink with the family. But in Belgrade, with some 300 000 inhabitants, the "slava" began to be a problem.

On the "slava" of St. Nicholas, for instance, December the 19th by the Western calendar, even I, although a foreigner, had a list of over forty houses of close friends which I must visit on that day. I used to take a cab and drive solemnly round from ten o'clock in the morning. At each house as I entered I had to take a spoonful of "zhito"—a delicious mixture of wheat, dried fruits, spices and

I know not what, which represented the body of the long dead Saint. Then I must take a spoonful of "slatko"—fruits preserved with all their delicious flavour in syrup. After this I must take and sip at least one sort of brandy, followed by glasses of one or two sorts of wine, and accompanied by cakes of many sorts and dried meats. Only when the hostess chose to have coffee served to me was I free to leave. In houses where I was not an intimate friend I could get through the ceremony and away in fifteen minutes without appearing to be in indecent haste. But in the many houses where I was a close family friend it took sometimes an hour and involved drinking half a dozen glasses of wine one after another at a draught, with the host.

I never remember getting right round all my duty calls on that day. Sometimes by eight in the evening already I was incapable of going farther and drove off home to bed. This meant that next day I had to finish the round with bunches of flowers and many apologies for not having called the day before. But there were people in Belgrade who had over a hundred visits to make on St. Nicholas' Day—think what it must have cost them in flowers next day!

To make matters even worse—or better, if you liked lots of visiting—all holidays in Belgrade were double. That is to say that owing to the thirteen-day lag between the Western and the Orthodox calendars there were two Christmases, two New Years, etc.

Thus we begin our season of festivities on December 6th—the Catholic St. Nicholas which was celebrated with especial ceremony by the Slovenes. They had huge parties at which St. Nicholas appeared with his attendant devils who questioned everyone in the party. Those who came through the interrogation successfully were given delightful little presents but those who failed to prove their righteousness were carried off by the red plush devils with black faces to a glowing hell, whence they emerged later smiling with still larger and nicer presents than their "good" friends. Then came the Orthodox St. Nicholas on December 19th, the Western Christmas on December 24th to 27th; the official New Year on December 31st and January 1st, the Orthodox Christmas on January 6th to 9th; the Orthodox New Year on January 13th and 14th, followed by two or three more "slavas" and ending with St. Sava's Day on January 20th, I believe. Nearly six weeks of almost constant feast days. Travellers coming to Belgrade on business in this period had a thin time, for shops and business houses closed down for all the bigger Saints' Days. There were two Easters and two Whitsundays most years also. Small wonder then that at the end of such a season many of the people of Belgrade had to go for a cure to Vrnjačka Banja.

To complete our round tour we must pass over the long monotonous plains of the Vojvodina, rich with

wheat, maize, vines, hops, fodder crops and vast pastures, through hundreds of wealthy towns and villages with their curious wells, the bucket of which is counterbalanced on a long pole by a heavy weight in stones, so that if it is pulled down and filled with water the weight of the stones will raise it out of the well without any effort. Here on the plains you will find pretty little girls in quaint costumes, with dozens of brightly-coloured petticoats, watching their flocks of geese. The people of these plains are short and stocky, whether they call themselves Serbs, Croats, Germans or Hungarians they look very much alike. They usually speak all three languages and the real test as to their race is that of their names, religion and costume. This is one of the granaries of southwest Europe and is therefore envied by the Hungarians and the Germans.

After an eight-hour journey over these dull plains the country becomes undulating again, and as real mountains begin to rise to north and south we reach Zagreb, capital of modern Croatia. Zagreb is a delightful town but much more shy and difficult to know properly than even Belgrade. On the surface it is exactly like a provincial German town—with all its faults. But just below the surface it is a really Slav town with the same intense love of song and dance, movement and colour, which is to be found everywhere in Yugoslavia.

One of the most interesting places in Zagreb to

the visitor is its huge central market where peasants from all around come to sell their wares. It may surprise a newcomer to find these Croatian men and women are fair haired and blue-eyed. This is the real unadulterated type of the South Slav people, undoubtedly Scandinavian or northern Asiatic by origin. In other parts they have mixed with other races or have been selected by the fact that the dark types tend to resist modern disease and modern conditions better than the fair types, so that the Yugoslav people tend to be dark rather than fair. Apparently the Croatian peasants of the Zagreb area have retained their racial purity more than most.

In Zagreb you will find the true Vienna type of cafe, where for a few pence the visitor gets all the local newspapers and many foreign ones too, to read with his white coffee piled high with whipped cream and his saffron bun. On the surface Zagreb is extremely Germanised, but stay a few days and you will find beneath the gloss all the happy characteristics of Belgrade. You will find that the real power here is not the former Austro-Hungarian aristocracy, which still secretly retains the titles which were abolished when the new state was formed. It is the peasant party of Croatia and its leaders such as Dr Matchek. Matchek lives most of his time now on his own little farm just outside the city. Here he keeps in close touch with the land, and so with the

hundreds of thousands of peasants who are united in this marvellously organised peasant party founded by the great master, Stjepan Raditch. Matchek has given up his black coat and striped trousers, mark of the lawyer, and taken to a peasant suit of white homespun linen. He has something of the Ruskin or, better still, the Tolstoy about him. He is keen on encouraging peasant art and peasant culture.

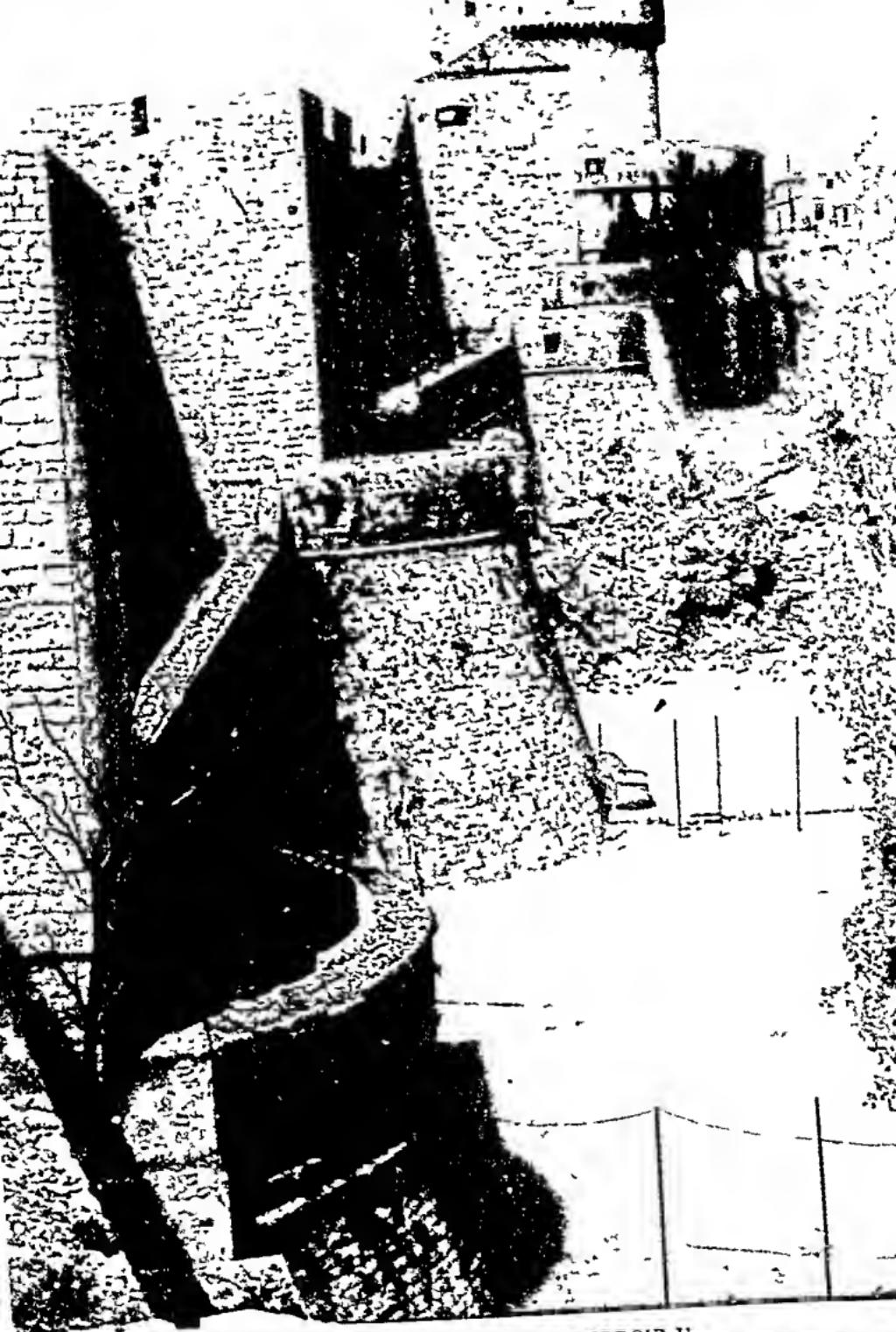
Once when we visited him, my wife and I, at a time when things were not going well with Belgrade, he offered us excellent Hertzegovinian tobacco, cut exceedingly fine, with the words, "You needn't be afraid to smoke this. It has paid no duty to Belgrade." A real rebel and a real democrat Matchek took over at a difficult time, after the murder in the Skupshtina of five Croatian deputies, including Raditch. It was not easy to follow Stjepan Raditch, one of the most brilliant political geniuses Yugoslavia has ever produced. It is said that he has handed over now to Pavelitch, the paid assassin of the Italians and Hungarians whom he always hated. I do not believe it.

Let us diverge for a few minutes on a sentimental journey. Let us visit the Plitvichka Lakes. Their extraordinary beauty will repay you, though for me it is enhanced greatly by sentimental reasons. Here amid these twenty-odd lakes, big and small, connected by waterfalls varying from ten to ninety feet high, set amid the forested mountains, I spent my first

holiday in Yugoslavia and some years later chose to spend, too, my honeymoon.

Nowhere have I seen, within so small a space, quite so much and so varied beauty. Two rivers, the Black and the White Rivers, running into a fault in the limestone rock, form a marvellous series of lakes and falls. The colour of the lakes varies from deep blue to the colour of watered milk, their size varies from tiny ponds to lakes many miles in length and thousands of feet in depth, the air in the valley where they lie is alive with the humming of the falls and the tinkle of swiftly running streams. As they fall they become progressively warmer. To bathe in the top lake, save at midsummer, is an ordeal. But the lowest lakes, just before they form the River Kupa are warm and deep, delightful bathing for the good swimmer.

It is interesting to visit the villages around. At one end of the lakes is a purely Serbian village. All the signs are in Cyrillic, the men wear typically Serbian peasant costume and the dialect is that of the Serbs from the Lika. On the hills to the right is a purely Croatian village. It is one of the poorest and most backward of all the villages of the district because its land is of the "karst" type and unfertile, and the village has not enough land to go round anyway. The houses have the open fires in the middle of the central living-room and are without chimneys, the smoke finding its way out finally through raised



OLD WALLS AT DUBROVNIK

For those who love the beauty which time gives to well placed stone.

slats in the roof. The family sleeps on straw or mattresses around the open fire, or on raised benches round the room. But the women of the village are clean and healthy and are dressed in most beautifully embroidered dresses of fine homespun materials. They make all their own dress materials and embroider them on the long winter evenings.

The hills all around the lakes are covered with thick beech and pine woods. Everywhere richly scented wild cyclamen are to be found in profusion and deliciously flavoured wild strawberries and wild raspberries. It is indeed a very paradise on earth and as yet unspoiled by tourists. In the lakes and in many streams in the hills around there are excellent trout and the fishing is free. The lakes are full of enormous crayfish which give very good sport and which make most excellent dishes when properly cooked. I have caught as many as two hundred in an evening.

To the south of the Plitvichka Lakes stretch the mountains of the Lika district and beyond the thick green forests of Bosnia. Here you will find some of the most picturesque scenery of Europe—the scenery which inspired the beautiful set of postage stamps which made the district famous among stamp collectors in the days of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. You will find also, as everywhere in Yugoslavia a most hospitable people. Tourism is, however, only in its infancy in Yugoslavia. As its people are

almost entirely a poor, hard working peasant people there are relatively few large country houses and country hotels are not very luxurious The people will give visitors all that they have and it is good and wholesome, but if you leave the beaten track you must be prepared to live as the people of the country live. As the country becomes more prosperous and begins to develop tourism as an industry conditions are getting much better for the foreign visitor from the point of view of comfort But I shall never regret the nights spent in mountain cottages and tiny wayside inns, the days of hiking through the mountains the long pleasant evenings eating and drinking in village cafes, which bring a man into contact with the real people of the land and teach a better appreciation of their great qualities—democracy and native intelligence, boundless hospitality—than can be possible in luxury hotels provided only for foreign visitors

# GROWING PAINS OF A NATION

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### GROWING PAINS OF A NATION

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THE Serb, Croat, Slovene Kingdom was born in some senses prematurely. The idea of Yugoslav unity was forced on very rapidly by the war. The actual creation of the State was hastened by the unexpectedly sudden collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy ; by the danger presented by Italian claims to districts purely Slav in population which had been promised her as a bribe in the secret Treaty of London in 1915 ; and by the actual occupation of some of these districts by Italians, whose domination was far more to be feared and hated even than that of the Austrians from which the population had been freed by the war. As a result the peoples of the different districts had had no time to work out in detail their plans for a new country nor to thrash out in public discussion together the form and system of government of the new State.

The manner in which the new State was created and the difficulties put in the way of its recognition at first were also unfortunate. For while in part the Serb, Croat, Solvene Kingdom came into being as the free

expression of the desire for union among representatives of the three peoples, in part it was the expression of gratitude by the Allies to Serbia for her gallant work during the war and the result of Serbian occupation of the conquered lands of her former enemy. The degree to which it owed its being to these two distinct and different causes led to much acrimonious discussion between the different parties in the new State at a later date.

Further, the differences which we have already traced in the history of the various provinces of which the Kingdom was built up, the utterly different outlook of the provinces which were Catholic and had looked westward for culture and political ideals from those which were Orthodox Christian or Moslem and had looked to the east, to the Byzantine Empire and to Russia, were bound to create enormous difficulties for those whose task it was to weld such different elements into a harmonious whole. Three religions, at least seven different legal and administrative systems, even two distinctive alphabets, the Cyrillic, which resembles Russian, and the Latin, ordinary European letters with special accents to give sounds represented in the Cyrillic alphabet by separate letters, all presented grounds for dissension and dispute.

The inner history of the Serb, Croat, Slovene State in its early years was obviously, therefore, bound to be a record of a series of failures. By trial and error

a way had to be found to solve the many difficulties which were bound to arise from any attempt to bring such varying elements into one single State. The result is often that the would be historian puts too much stress on the failures and the many mistakes which were undoubtedly made and not enough on the real successes achieved under the most difficult of circumstances. For not only had the government of the new State to contend with the natural difficulties of the task of uniting its previously divergent elements, but it had to do it in the face of continuous attempts to prevent its success by envious or fearful neighbours.

Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and to a lesser degree Austria and Rumania all considered for various reasons that they had claims on parts of the territories of the new State and tried, with varying degrees of persistency, to stimulate dissension among the different groups within the Kingdom in the hopes of weakening it sufficiently to allow them to seize the territories they desired. The very fact that despite many malicious attempts to destroy it, the Serb, Croat, Slovene State continued not merely to exist but to thrive and gradually to achieve comparative unity and prosperity over a period of some twenty-two years is in itself a triumph. And in view of the fact that support from outside forces often tended to make the demands of the various internal parties far more extensive than they would otherwise have been

the degree of unity attained was little short of extraordinary

It would be fatally easy for one who has watched this progress from day to day, no orderly regular move forward, but a series of waves sweeping back ward and forward but ending eventually in a definite advance, and who has not failed to criticise those responsible for the manifold mistakes committed, to indulge in useless recriminations. I shall try merely to chronicle the events and tendencies of this period without trying to apportion praise or blame for successes and failures.

The great source of trouble in the internal situation was and still is to some extent the conflict between those who want Yugoslavia to be a single, unitary State with a powerful central government and those who want a federation which would allow of the individual development of each of the historic provinces along those lines which its past history and resultant outlook make desirable.

It is perfectly natural that the Serbs should tend, with a steadily growing number of exceptions, to favour the creation of a strongly centralised State. Their own independent State had been completely homogeneous, one race, one religion, one alphabet, so much so that the name Serb was applied to all who were Orthodox Christian and used the Cyrillic alphabet wherever they lived. The Yugoslav idea had not been very strong in Serbia. They had

worked hard to "free their racial brothers from Austro-Hungarian domination" but they had been far more concerned with liberating and uniting to themselves the Serbs of the former Monarchy than the Catholic Croats and Slovenes. The ideal of many of the older Serbian statesmen, who naturally had much to say in the affairs of the new State, had been rather the creation of a "Greater Serbia," which would have added the Vojvodina, the greater part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and South Serbia to their existing Kingdom, rather than the much more doubtful attempt to create a completely new State with no common historical basis. The "Greater Serbia" plan had also the full support of Tzarist Russia, which was not so keen on the inclusion of large numbers of Catholics in what it wanted to be a powerful Orthodox State. The only close contact which the Serbs had had with the federal idea had been in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy—which they had just seen fall to pieces.

There was also a not unnatural tendency for the Serbs, who had borne the brunt of the fight against the Austro-Hungarian enemy and had sacrificed 1,500,000 of her people to achieve unity, to consider that they had the right to say how the State created by their sacrifices should be governed.

On the other hand the Croatians had been working for many decades to win for themselves autonomy in a federal State. It was not until the brutal persecution

of their people during the war that many of them began to realise that their future lay not in a truncated Austrian Monarchy but in union with the Serbs. Even then they had always visualised such union as in the nature of the relationship they had wanted to win from Austria. They would have autonomous administration and an equal status in the central government which would deal only with foreign affairs, defence, customs, and perhaps communications.

The Slovenes, too, had thought of Yugoslavia as a federal organisation. Under Austria they had enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy and had been able, thanks to their remarkably well organised economic and social life, arranged on a co-operative basis under the control of the Catholic Church, to develop their individual culture.

Probably the majority of the Montenegrins people, being pure Serb and pious Orthodox Christians, were content after the attempt of their King to betray the country owing to his jealousy of Serbia, to sink their identity in a central Yugoslavia. But there remained a very vocal minority who wanted the historical greatness of their little people to be remembered. These demanded either autonomy under their own local government or even the recreation of an independent State under one of Nicholas' sons. This last group, small in number, were keenly supported by Italy, which gave the late King of Monte-

negro and his family pensions in order to be able, they hoped, to use them later to bring about the separation of Montenegro from Yugoslavia.

There was a strong element in Macedonia which wanted autonomy for that province. They considered that they were neither Serbs nor Bulgars, but an independent Slav race with different traits from either of those peoples, their own language, literature, and traditions. When they failed to obtain autonomy under Yugoslav federal control they obtained help from Bulgaria and tried to smash the Yugoslav State in order to get autonomy in a federal Bulgaria. Their leaders fled to Bulgaria, where there were already a big body of Macedonians demanding autonomy, and were in turn used by or used the Bulgarian government to further their aims. Later these same people, degenerated in time into mere paid assassins, were paid by the Italians and still later by the Nazis in their campaign to weaken Yugoslavia.

The fact that foreign powers continually used the perfectly genuine aspirations of various provinces for greater autonomy, in their base schemes for preventing Yugoslavia becoming strong and united added greatly to the difficulties of the government. They were often forced to deal ruthlessly with those who demanded autonomy, not because of their demands, but because they were considered the agents of a foreign power working against the Yugoslav State. The mere fact that outside enemies were prepared to

back the demand for federation with money and arms tended to strengthen the case for centralism.

It so happened that the elements which demanded federation in Croatia (as opposed to the small group of Frankists which wanted separation) were mostly the 'left wing' people of the Croatian Peasant Party, whose great leader Stjepan Raditch even visited Soviet Russia as a delegate to the Peasant International. Now King Alexander was very much under the influence of his sister, Princess Tyskina, who had been married to a Russian Grand Duke and had barely escaped with her life when her husband had been killed during the Russian Revolution. Under her influence he gave asylum to enormous numbers of White Russian refugees, who were given good jobs with far better pay than their Serbian equivalents and who became a powerful political element. Under their influence the King suppressed ruthlessly anything which savoured of 'left wing'.

Nikola Pashutch, the veteran leader of the Serbian Radical party, who was at that time losing ground to the Democrats and also to the Communists, Serbian Peasant Party and the Social Democrats, utilised this weakness of King Alexander for his own purposes. He persuaded the King to give him power to stamp out Bolshevism (although Nikola Pashutch had himself been a disciple of Lenin when an exile in Switzerland as a young man) and he used the position to crush all his enemies, even the very moderate



THE GRAPE HARVEST IN SHUMADIJA

"The wine is made and sold by a co-operative organisation of the peasant growers."

Social Democrats. The King's dislike of progressive parties was also used to influence him against the Croatian Peasant Party.

The King was also influenced in his detestation of Soviet Russia by the fact that in 1920 a communist, alleged to have been sent directly from Russia, attempted to murder him by throwing a bomb.

The legislation against the Communists which was passed while the King was under the influence of these events was used by later governments to secure the arrest of Stjepan Raditch, on the grounds that his visit to the Peasant International at Moscow made him a communist, and for the suppression of any of their enemies. It was enough to label a man communist to excuse whatever ill-treatment he might be subjected to.

Right from the beginning differences arose as to the interpretation of the Declaration of Corfu, which was considered by the Croats as a sort of charter guaranteeing them "local autonomy" amounting almost to federation. The Serbs interpreted the Declaration as meaning that local government institutions were to remain in the hands of the local population and perhaps even increased in power but took the phrase "a single free and independent kingdom" to justify a completely centralist government.

The Croats had demanded that the provisional

parliament which was to arrange for the election of a constituent assembly should meet at Sarajevo, so that it should be held on neutral ground as between Belgrade and Zagreb. This was not granted and instead a cabinet meeting held in Belgrade summoned a provisional parliament including a very large number of Serbs to meet there in the spring of 1919. After considerable bickering this provisional parliament passed a law arranging for the election of a constituent assembly, which was finally elected on November the 28th, 1920.

These elections, which the opposition immediately declared to have been "rigged," gave the following results: Democrats, 92, Radicals, 91, Communists, 38, Land workers, 39, Social Democrats, 10, Croatian Party, 30, Slovene People's Party, 27, and Yugoslav Moslems, 24 seats. Since all the Serbian parties, including the Communists and the Social Democrats, were in favour of a central government, this gave the centralists a majority of 189, which enabled them despite fierce debates and denunciations in the Assembly to pass a centralistic constitution on June 28th, 1921. This was made more easy by the withdrawal of the Croatian Peasant members from Belgrade. As it was passed on Vidovdan—(St. Vitus Day), the anniversary of the battle of Kosovo and the murder at Sarajevo of the Grand Duke, it was always known as the Vidovdan Constitution.

This constitution provided for a unitary State,

with a constitutional monarchy and a single chamber parliament elected by manhood suffrage. It vested legislative power in the King and the National Assembly jointly and made the validity of the King's acts dependent on his securing the signature of the responsible minister. Elections were held on a system which gave a really secret ballot, unknown at that time in Hungary and other neighbouring States, and were to ensure minority representation by a modified form of proportional representation. To ensure the secrecy of the ballot in a country where there was a high percentage of illiteracy and where it would not do to trust the local policeman to show illiterate people where to put their cross, a complicated system had to be devised. Each party had its own box in each polling station and a "keeper of the box" who stood behind it and shouted to voters the name and programme of the candidate. As a voter entered and proved his identity he was given a small hard rubber ball. As he passed along the row of boxes he had to put his clenched fist, enclosing the ball, into each of the boxes in turn. In one of them, known only to himself, he dropped the ball, but he must put his fist into each of the remaining boxes so that no one else should know in which the ball had been dropped. At the end of the row he had to open his fist to prove that he had voted.

It is said that if three Englishmen were thrown together on a desert island they would form a club;

three Germans would open an office, three Yugoslav citizens would form two political parties. Politics is one of the passions of the Balkan peasant. It takes the place of football and racing. It is his great sport. By day in the fields and by night in the cafe it is the great subject of conversation. Small wonder then that for much of the time while the Vidovdan Constitution was in force—some eight and a half years—there were twenty-one different parties. Every few months there was a government crisis, often due to purely personal quarrels among the leaders of a party or between members of the Cabinet. There seems to have been interference too from some non-parliamentary force which sometimes precipitated crises which seemed entirely unjustifiable by any known factor in the parliamentary situation. In one notorious case Nikola Uzunovitch, Serb Radical leader, formed six governments in one single year.

During the first years of this period the Croatian Peasant Party members of parliament refused to sit, as they refused to recognise the centralist Vidovdan Constitution as valid. The Croatian Peasant Party was the best organised and most disciplined party in the country. It had been built up over a long period of years by Stjepan Raditch, a man of extraordinary genius but as hard to pin down to an agreement as a will-o' the-wisp. Short, fat, almost blind, quick witted, sharp of tongue, with teeming energy and



### BUDVA

It is still worth the risk of discomfort to go to see the quaint town, jutting right out into the sea.

indomitable will, Raditch combined the simple virtues of the peasant with the erudition of the much travelled scholar. From 1918 to 1924 he spent his time travelling on foot or by peasant cart from village to village, making friends, building up his peasant organisation, fanning the enthusiasm of his followers by his brilliant speeches and his peasant songs. In 1924 he fled the country and paid visits to England, Austria and Russia. When the Radical party fell at the end of that year and the Democrats under Ljuba Davidovitch came to power with Croatian support Raditch returned to Yugoslavia. A few months later Davidovitch fell, Raditch was found hiding in a hole dug under the walls of his house and was thrown into prison.

The mercurial nature of Raditch is well illustrated by the fact that he came almost directly from prison to become Minister of Education, having accepted the Monarchy and the Constitution. I believe that Raditch deliberately adopted a Republican policy in order to kill the Habsburg tradition which was very powerful in Croatia. It would have been difficult to get the Croatian masses to change over directly from loyalty to one Emperor to loyalty to a different King. But having been republican in the meanwhile made the transition possible.

Raditch spent quite forty years of his life in opposition, first in the Croatian Diet and the Austrian Parliament and later in Yugoslavia. The aggressive

attitude developed by constant opposition never left him. Even as Minister of Education in the Uzunovitch Government he could not refrain from violent attacks on his Serbian colleagues. As a result the government fell and he had to leave the cabinet. For a few months a coalition was maintained on the understanding that Raditch would keep silent. A village built on an active volcano would have been safer than a coalition based on Raditch's silence. Within a few months another brilliant, witty, indiscreet attack on the Serbian ministers in the government broke down the agreement and the Croats were once more in opposition.

Another difficulty in the situation was the powerful personality of Svetzar Pribitchevitch, the leader of the Serbs of Croatia. In the early years he made a powerful agreement with Nikola Paštitch and was responsible for advising Paštitch and the King to take the strong line they did take against the Croatian Peasant Party. Some years later he was to make a pact of friendship with Raditch, hitherto his most bitter enemy, to try to obtain the federal constitution which he had so strongly opposed for so many and such important years.

The wave of economic distress which swept across the whole of Europe after the War and did not spare even the richest and most powerful states, worked havoc in this newly created state, whose economic life had been totally disorganised by the

war and the post-war changes. Everyone in the state, Serbs as much as Croats, blamed the world crisis (or at least its immediate effects on them) on their own government. It had not been like that in independent Serbia, it had not been like that under Austro-Hungary, it had not been like that even under the Turks—was to be heard on every side.

The constant bickering in Parliament made it impossible to get much serious legislative work accomplished. As a result the laws of the different provinces were not unified. This enabled the Croats to point out that under the old Austro-Hungarian tax laws they were more highly taxed than the people of Serbia, still taxed according to the pre-war Serbian law. This discrepancy in taxation was really due rather to the fact that Serbia had been completely denuded of wealth by the war and had not recovered sufficiently to allow her people to pay anything like so much in taxation as the richer people of Croatia who had not suffered exile and enemy occupation. But it seemed to give grounds for attack and any stick was good enough.

This feeling of economic inequality was further inflamed by the fact that the Austrian kronen, which was the Croatian currency before the union, had completely lost its value. The Belgrade government did redeem these notes at the rate of four to one dinar, a very fair rate, far and away above the market value of the kronen. But this did not alter the fact that

the Croatian people lost three-quarters of their monetary wealth. Actually the Yugoslav state lost heavily over this transaction, the more so as Austrian and Hungarian smugglers, sometimes using diplomatic privilege to get them in, brought huge sums in these notes into the country and got them exchanged at this artificially high rate.

Even though a whole series of bad harvests added still further to the misery of the people there was no question even at this time, of separation. Raditch, going once more into opposition after his unfortunate attempt at collaboration with the Radicals, proclaimed that he loved and respected the Serbian people, but was going to fight against the corruption of the Belgrade government. Also the stabilisation of the dinar and the growth of trade between the industries of Croatia and Slovenia and the peasants of Serbia began to forge those economic bonds which are so powerful a force for union in a well balanced state.

In 1928, the situation in the Belgrade Skupshtina (Parliament) got rapidly worse. The death of the veteran Serbian leader Nikola Pashitch, who had been Prime Minister in Serbia and Yugoslavia for over eighteen years of his life, had greatly weakened the Radical Party, the strongest of the old Serbian parties and the most staunchly opposed to federation. After the elections of 1927, Pribitchevitch, Raditch and Yovan Yovanovitch had formed a democratic

bloc including the Independent Democrat Party, the Croatian Peasant Party and the Serbian Peasant Party, and had sent a written invitation to Ljuba Davidovitch to bring his Democrat Union to join them. If they had done so the bloc would have had 172 members, which would have meant a majority in the Skupshtina for the federal forces.

Even without the collaboration of the Democrat Union the opposition was very strong. Raditch and Pribitchevitch were both brilliant speakers and their envenomed attacks on the government brought about a strained situation. The former members of the Croatian Diet and the Austrian and Hungarian parliaments were also experts at the art of obstruction. One day the doors of the Skupshtina were flung open and a naked man, alleged to have been beaten by the police, was carried in to show his bruises. Another day four members who had been expelled from the House for disobeying the President the day before, refused to accept his ruling and insisted on taking their seats. When invited to leave they refused. Finally a squad of gendarmes was called in, and amid a terrific uproar a most undignified game of hide-and-seek was played among the benches of the parliament before the four were caught and thrown out. When it was all over and order had been restored Pribitchevitch rose and made a violent protest against the unconstitutional entry of police into the parliament.

When no other form of obstruction could be found the opposition held up work by shouting insults at the government, to which the government supporters replied in kind, and by banging loudly the lids of their desks, so that nothing could be heard of what the speakers. It was after three days of such constant disturbances during which the opposition used the attempt of the government to obtain ratification of the unpopular Neutrino Conventions with Italy as an excuse for one long unabated uproar of protest, that the great tragedy of June 20th took place.

Within an hour of the Skupština opening the Speaker had been forced to adjourn the meeting owing to violent disorders. When the meeting was resumed Punisha Ratchitch, a hot headed Montenegrin, rose to speak. The opposition immediately began cat-calling, shouting insults, and banging the lids of their desks so that Ratchitch could not make himself heard. Becoming more and more angry and frustrated Ratchitch began a personal exchange of insults with the Croatian deputy, Pernar. Then he left the tribune and standing in front of Pernar he shouted in a terrible voice, "Serbian interests have never been in such grave danger save when guns and rifles have been firing. If I see my people in danger I openly state that I shall use other weapons, if necessary, to protect their interests." The whole House was immediately in an uproar. Pernar, white

with rage, shouted, "You robbed the Begs"—a terrible insult for a Montenegrin. Ratchitch demanded an apology. The Speaker closed the meeting and left his seat. Ratchitch drew a revolver and again demanded an instant apology. Getting no reply Ratchitch shook off friends who tried to restrain him, and shouting "No Montenegrin can pardon such an insult," fired two shots into Pernar. Dr. Basaritchev, seeing that Ratchitch was still pointing his revolver towards the seat where Stjepan Raditch sat, rushed forward to disarm Ratchitch but was shot through the heart, and fell between the tables at which stenographers were still writing the last words which Ratchitch had said from the tribune. Grandia, sitting next to Raditch, pulled him down on the seat and tried to protect him with his own body. He was shot through the hand and when he jumped up shouting with pain another shot was fired and struck Stjepan Raditch in the arc of stomach which showed above the desk as he lay on the seat. Pavle Raditch, seeing his uncle's danger, rushed forward and was shot through the breast.

Basaritchev and Pavle Raditch, two of the most moderate of the Croatian leaders, died that day and Stjepan Raditch, idol of the Croatian peasantry, was in grave danger. Yet once again, even in these difficult and dangerous days, there was no question of Croatia wishing to leave the union. Mrs. Pavle Raditch expressed popular feeling when she said,

"May Pavle's head be the last sacrifice for peace between Serbs and Croats" I visited Zagreb for the funeral of the dead leaders and was amazed at the magnificent discipline of the 300,000 peasant delegates assembled there. In their picturesque and often beautifully embroidered costumes they gathered before the Peasants' Hall to pay their last tribute to those fallen in the fight for liberty. They listened soberly to many speeches and showed enthusiasm when Pribitchevitch spoke as representative of the Serbs of Croatia and when he read a message from Stjepan Raditch thanking God that the Croats and the Serbs of the new provinces, once so bitterly opposed, now stood shoulder to shoulder. Raditch stated his belief that the Serb, Croat, Slovene people and the King would succeed in solving the problem now before them.

At first it looked as though the desire of the whole Yugoslav people to make amends for the Skupshtina tragedy would result in progress towards the settlement of the problem of the claims of the ex Hapsburg provinces. There were, however, long delays before the Vukitchevitch Government could be brought to resign, and the attempt of General Hadjitch, who, on Raditch's suggestion had been given a mandate to form an entirely non party government, to find non party political representatives of all provinces, failed. The people of the ex Hapsburg provinces became exasperated and as a result of their extreme statements

feeling in Serbia hardened against them again. Finally the King called in Father Koroshetz, the Slovene leader, who had succeeded in gaining a position of special privilege for his people by playing off the Serbs against the Croats, and allowed him to form a government which was to all intents and purposes a resurrection of the old Vukitchevitch government. This further incensed the members from the ex-Hapsburg-provinces who withdrew from Belgrade and for many months persistently refused to have any dealings with the supporters of what they termed the "blood-stained government."

A deadlock seemed to have been reached. As a result of the constant disorder in the Skupshtina, the country—Serbia as much as the ex-Hapsburg provinces—had lost confidence in the Belgrade Government. Important legislation, urgently needed throughout the whole land, had been neglected owing to party squabbles, there had been no unification of legislation and the administrative machine was regrettably slow and corrupt. A series of bad harvests had left the peasants dissatisfied and had caused the bankruptcy of many traders. This was the situation when King Alexander decided to intervene to save the country from the chaos and danger which resulted from the attempt to make the Vidovdan Constitution work.

WORKING FOR UNITY

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## CHAPTER VIII

### WORKING FOR UNITY

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KING ALEXANDER was a most exceptional man. Born in 1888, third son of an exiled Serbian Prince, in a small house near Tzeticje—capital then of one of Europe's smallest and poorest states—few could have foreseen that he would one day be king of a powerful state of which, at that time, only the barest foundation had been laid.

The execution of Alexander and Draga Obrenovitch in 1903 brought his father to the throne of Serbia. The death of one brother in infancy and the abdication of another in 1909 made him heir to the Serbian throne. Two Balkan wars, in both of which he played a conspicuous part, and the World War in which he commanded the gallant Serbian forces, created the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom whose destinies he was now to guide.

He was educated in the Corps des Pages at the Court of the Russian Tsar. The whole of his youth was spent in fighting. He showed great personal courage during the eight years of war. After the terrible sufferings and dangers of the retreat through

Albania, which he made on foot with his men, he was asked to go on board an Italian destroyer at St Jean de Medua. Although seriously ill and exhausted he refused to leave his men and was carried with them on a stretcher, in constant danger of attack by the oncoming Austrian troops, down the coast to Durazzo.

Like many great generals Alexander had a remarkable memory for men. He liked to get away from his staff and to walk through the fields and villages of South Serbia by himself. He would stop to talk to peasants by the wayside. Frequently he would remember them from when they served in the war and would tell them where they were on some particular day, what regiment they served in, and the names of their officers. If not, he would ask them where they were during a certain period of the war. When they told him he would immediately tell them the unit in which they served and the names of all its officers.

Alexander had great charm of manner, especially when dealing with his peasants, and, when he wished, with foreign diplomats and politicians he wished to win over to his way of thinking. But he was exceedingly severe with his ministers and officials, so that more than one of his prime ministers has stood trembling at the door of his study while awaiting the moment to enter. He worked very hard himself, rising at 7 a.m. and rarely leaving his

work before 1 a.m. of the next day, and he expected hard work of his subordinates.

Passionately interested in the development of the country he had done so much to create, the King was intolerant of the constant quarrels of the various parties and especially of all attempts to lessen the power of the central government. He thought as a soldier, and it seemed to him that unified control was of the essence of victory. As the years passed and the situation got steadily worse he thought more and more how different it was now from when, as Commander-in-Chief of the army during the war, he had merely to say "Do this" and it was done, without question, discussion or delay. When all other ways out of the crisis due to the murder of two Croatian deputies in the Skupshtina and the subsequent death from wounds of Stjepan Raditch seemed to have failed the King decided to try to find a solution himself. On January, 6th 1929, a Royal Proclamation posted throughout Belgrade and in every town and village of the country simultaneously in the early hours of the morning, abolished the Constitution, dissolved the Skupshtina, and made the country subject to government by royal decree.

The Royal Proclamation declared that this step had been made necessary by the growth of corruption in public life, the subjugation of national interests to personal, party or tribal interests, and the failure of

## THE SOUL OF YUGOSLAVIA

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parliament to accomplish even a tithe of the urgent work demanded of it during the last ten years. A list of the members of the King's cabinet followed. They were led by General Peter Zhivkovich, Commandant of the Royal Guard, the only member of the famous Black Hand organisation which executed Alexander Obrenovitch to receive any reward for his services. Many of the members of his cabinet, which was certainly not a military one, were experts appointed for their special knowledge. Thus Dr Shviljegz, Minister of Finance, was a Croat who had been president of the Zagreb Bourse and associated with many big Yugoslav and international banking houses. Dr Frangesh, Minister of Agriculture, was a Croat who had been Professor of Agriculture at Zagreb University. Lazar Radivojevitch, Minister of Forests had exposed, as head of a commission of inquiry, the corruption of seven different Ministers of Forests of different parties and tribes.

Within an amazingly short time of its creation the new government produced a spate of new laws which all passed into force immediately by royal decree. These laws modified the powers of the King giving him all executive, legislative and administrative power, greatly strengthened the Defence of the Realm Act, forbidding completely all political parties bearing religious or tribal names or whose objects were opposed to those of the new



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regime and instituting a complete censorship of the press.

The King's act was greeted with enthusiasm everywhere throughout the country. The Serbs were glad that the era of corruption and inefficiency was over, and while there was a certain uneasiness among this liberty-loving people at the restrictions inseparable from dictatorship, there was rejoicing that the whole creaky administrative machinery was to be overhauled, the tangled skein of party politics unravelled, and a new attempt made to achieve some measure of real national unity. The Croats were delighted to see the end of the "bloody" parliament in which Stjepan Raditch and his friends had been killed and of the Vidovdan Constitution for which they had never voted and which they had never recognised. It was understood by all that once order and safety had been restored there would be a return to "normal," by which everyone imagined the King meant parliamentary and democratic institutions.

The cleansing of the Augean Stables of Yugoslav political life began immediately. The administrative services were thoroughly reformed, government expenditure was reduced and controlled, and rigorous measures were introduced to stop corruption. Even the traditional habit of offering every visitor to a government official's office to drink a cup of strong, sweet Turkish coffee—source of much wasted time—

was forbidden. The criminal law of the country was unified and codified, special tribunals for the protection of the State were set up, laws regulating the relations of the State with various religions were revised, much of the urgently needed legislation which the Skupshtina had failed to pass in ten years was rushed out by decree in about ten weeks.

On October 3rd, 1919, the name of the country was officially changed from the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to the Yugoslav Kingdom. Nationality was decreed to be one and indivisible and completely new administrative divisions, cutting across the old historical boundaries of provinces, were drawn with a view to abolishing the "tribal" conception and encouraging the various provincial elements to live as equals.

The King firmly believed that it was prejudices due to former historical divisions which kept alive hate and prevented the full unification of the country. If these memories could be destroyed the country could be made into one homogeneous land. So after first destroying all the historical political parties he now did away with the old historical administrative divisions in the hope that the end of Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia would mean the end of the Croatian, the Bosnian and the Serbian questions.

Despite the muzzling of public opinion this new move did not go unchallenged. Many of the Croats believed that it was merely a device to crush out the

Croatian movement by labelling it tribal and forbidding it. Most Serbs were profoundly disturbed by the loss of their famous battle standards and the disappearance of the State they had sacrificed so much to create. It was pointed out that the new political divisions, drawn on a map without much regard to topography, were economically unsound. Many districts were cut off from their former market centres.

There was also growing uneasiness that although so much had been done in the way of administrative reforms there was no move in the direction of bringing the dictatorship to an end. In July, 1930, a Manifesto was published which tended to remove all hope of a return to a democratic system. This Manifesto declared that the old provinces and the old parties were gone once and for ever, and that the present regime would last "until its task was completed."

Partly under the influence of the sudden departure of King Alfonso from Spain, and of the general wave of democratic feeling which swept Europe at that moment, and partly to redeem his promise that once its task was completed there would be a return to constitutional government, the King gave the country a new constitution on September 3rd, 1931.

The Constitution of 1931 gave the Throne greatly extended powers. The King became a constitutionally absolute monarch. Further it forbade all

societies or parties based on regional, religious or class distinctions. The monarchy was described as "hereditary and constitutional," but not as in the 1921 constitution "parliamentary." A Senate was created to act as a check on the Skupština. The Crown had the right to appoint fifty per cent of the Senators, the other half being elected. The secret ballot was abolished and a system of open voting by declaration before a polling committee was instituted. The right to suspend the constitution was granted whenever the King thought "the public interest might be generally menaced."

A few days later the new electoral law was promulgated. It was so framed as to make it impossible for any of the old parties to take part in the election. The Government party—named the Yugoslav National Party—had already prepared its lists of nominations for 1,330 candidates, although the number to be elected was only 315. No other party was able to satisfy the very complex regulations for the submission of a list of candidates to the electors within the prescribed time. So the Government Party had the field to themselves. But to add interest to the contest they put up several candidates for each seat. As a result of this strategy quite a high percentage of the total vote seems to have been cast. The result was the return of 145 members of the former Radical party, 37 former Democrats, and 28 members of the former Croatian Peasant party.



Nikola Uzunovitch, Serbian Radical Party leader, a notorious centralist, was appointed premier, but nearly all important legislation continued to be made by Royal Decree and not by the vote of the Skupština. The stringent censorship of the press was retained and there was little or no relaxation of the dictatorship. It is true that in 1932 there were signs of some slight changes. The Croatian "National Peasant Party" was allowed to hold meetings and in November the electoral law was so far relaxed as to allow of a list being presented with only thirty signatures in fifty per cent. of the constituencies instead of twenty signatures in each of the 315 constituencies. The Minister of Interior had still the power to veto any new list at his own discretion.

The resignation of General Zhivkovitch in April, 1932, and the appointment of Dr. Marinkovitch, former Democrat leader, as Premier, was hailed as a move in the direction of real parliamentarism. Marinkovitch was replaced soon afterwards by Dr. Srshkitch, a Serb from Bosnia, who immediately published a programme based on the decentralisation of administration and the dividing among the provincial governments (banovina councils) of part of the funds of the central government. This raised high hopes among most of the provincial parties. While the Serbian parties had been badly hit by the provisions of the constitution disbanding any parties with tribal, provincial or religious bases, the Slovenian

and Croatian parties had suffered little. Both of them had many economic and cultural organisations which were still in existence and both of them used the Catholic Church as a means of keeping their supporters in touch with the leaders.

But these hopes were dashed to the ground when Dr Matchek, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party since the death of Raditch, drew up a proclamation enumerating five points upon which the Croats based their opposition to King Alexander's rule. They demanded the full restoration of democracy, the social reorganisation of the State on a peasant basis, the end of the Serbian hegemony, the wiping out of all that had happened since 1918, and a beginning afresh as from the day of unification, and complete equality of rights for all the various tribal groups in the State. In this matter they voiced an opinion which had been expressed by Croats who had formerly supported the King's Government (Nikola Nikitch and Grg Andjelinovitch for example) that the Croats were not being treated as equals by the régime.

One of the greatest mistakes made by King Alexander's government at this time was the prosecution of Dr Matchek for the publication of the proclamation of the Croatian Peasant Party. Matchek who is a quiet, Ghandi like, little man, had already acquired some of the attributes of martyrdom owing to his imprisonment and trial three years before. The charges brought against him were of having

conspired to break up the Yugoslav State. If he were to be acquitted again this would react badly upon the prestige of the government. But if he were found guilty it would mean that the whole Croatian people, for Matchek represented at least ninety per cent of them, were against the continued existence of the Yugoslav State—a fact which would not escape notice abroad and especially in Italy and Hungary.

During the trial Matchek maintained that he had never advocated that Croatia should leave the Yugoslav Kingdom, but had merely fought for Croatian liberty within the frontiers of the State. The trial gave a marvellous opportunity for an impressive statement of solidarity by other opposition leaders. The leaders of the Serbian Radical, Democrat and Peasant parties, representing almost the whole Serbian people, issued a statement condemning "the suppression of the free expression of the opinions of the Croats on their position and on the development of the State, a State which must be based on freedom and complete equality." It would be too much to suggest that it was the deliberate intent of the Royal Government but it is an undoubted fact that the King's dictatorship, by suppressing equally severely the liberties of all parties, Serb, Croat and Slovene, did actually succeed in producing a degree of understanding and agreement between these various factions which had never been equalled before.

THE SOUL OF YUGOSLAVIA

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The revival of strong opposition from the very leaders of the old parties which he had tried so hard to stamp out angered King Alexander greatly. He is said to have told one of his ministers that he would maintain the regime of January 6th, 1929 "until all those mammoths—Davidovitch, Stanojevitch, Trifunovitch and company—had died out." When this was reported to Ljuba Davidovitch, who had been the King's tutor in his youth, he said, "To think that Alexander has forgotten that I, as his tutor, taught him that mammoths were very long lived and had extremely tough hides." The "mammoths" were indeed all to survive him and one of them at least, Misha Trifunovitch, was to take part in the Patriots' Revolt of 1941.

Matchek was sentenced to three years imprisonment, and shortly afterwards Father Koroshetz, the Slovene leader, and Spaho, leader of the Bosnian Moslems, were interned for having published pamphlets condemning the non-democratic regime and advocating reorganisation on a federal basis. Davidovitch, heedless of their fate, also published a letter to his supporters attacking the regime as corrupt and inefficient and advocating a federal system. The Radical leaders did the same. The experiment of enforced and complete centralism had had the effect of uniting the leaders of the whole Yugoslav people under the banner of federalism.

Whatever one may think of King Alexander's

great experiment at compulsory unification there can be no doubt whatever that in the sphere of foreign affairs, with which I will treat more fully later, he had had the most astounding series of triumphs. From an economic point of view also the situation had changed vastly for the better. A comparatively long period free from the open strife and constant uneasiness of the quasi-parliamentary experiment had allowed great progress to be made. The comparative efficiency of the dictatorial government in putting economic regulations into force had enabled the regime to reorganise the banking and commercial system of the State. Even the unification of the previously widely conflicting elements of the opposition, unconscious and unwanted though it may have been, was a most valuable achievement. I believe that King Alexander realised this. I am certain that he was completely serious when he called Dr. Nintchitch to him, a few days before he left for Marseilles, kept him deep into the night in conversation over innumerable strong, black Turkish coffees, and confessed to him that in internal affairs his regime had failed but that he was determined on his return to try to put things right and to return by degrees to the broader basis of full democracy.

King Alexander was killed at Marseilles. This was the fourth attempt to kill him. The first was alleged to have taken place at Salonika in 1917. There was little evidence and it is possible that no

attempt took place. The second was in 1920 in Belgrade, when a man said to have been sent straight from Moscow tried to kill the King as he went to Parliament. This was one of the excuses for the ruthless suppression of all left wing parties. The third attempt was made in Zagreb, in 1935, when Alexander went there to spend his birthday among the Croats. This was proved to have been planned in Italy, but it did spoil a sincere attempt on the part of the King to wipe out the psychological cause of the Croatian dissatisfaction—an inferiority complex due to the fact that whereas under the Empire they had enjoyed much of the pomp and ceremony of the Austro-Hungarian Court and frequent visits from royal personages after the union the King visited them but rarely and for the shortest of visits.

The murder at Marseilles was planned in Italy and Hungary and financed by Italy. During the trial of the murderers at Aux the Yugoslav Government was persuaded by the British Foreign Office, which was then very keen on the appeasement of Italy, not to produce the huge dossier of evidence against Italy but to put all the blame on Hungary. The murderer was a Macedonian named Georgiev, a professional assassin, who had been an instructor at the school for terrorists organised by the Hungarians at Janka Pushta in Hungary. The plans had been made in Italy by Pavelitch, an extreme Croatian separatist, who had fled the country after January 6th, 1929.

and had lived since then on the largesse of various foreign governments. The Italian idea was to bring about a state of chaos in Yugoslavia by killing the men whose personality and inspiration had kept the country together. They would then have landed groups of Croatian terrorists, who had been specially trained for the task in a number of large camps in various parts of north Italy, on the Croatian coast. These paid agents would raise the standard of revolt and appeal for help from Italy. Italian troops in the guise of "volunteers" would then have been poured into Yugoslavia, as they were later into Spain, in order to "free" the Croatians from "Serbian" rule.

There were two serious miscalculations in this plan. The first was due to the decisive action of the British Minister in Belgrade, Sir Nevile Henderson, one of the closest personal friends of the late King. The British Mediterranean Fleet had been spending a summer "vacation," as was its wont, in visiting the Dalmatian coast and mixing the pleasures of exchanging hospitality with the delightful people of that district with the business of making the finest charts in existence of the islands and channels of that difficult coast. It left the Kotor Estuary, that marvellous natural harbour amid the mountains in which the whole fleet could lie in good deep anchorage, on the very day Alexander was murdered. Sir Nevile had it brought back not merely to Kotor but on a cruise right up the Adriatic coast as far as Sushak.

There was no chance for the Italian rebels to get across and Italy was afraid to take action beneath the guns of British warships

The second mistake was that of believing that it was only the personality of King Alexander which kept Yugoslavia united. His death under such tragic circumstances, at a moment when he had achieved some of his most popular diplomatic triumphs, instead of splitting the country brought its people more closely together. In their common grief the natural unity of the country asserted itself as never before since the joyous days of December, 1918.

Since early December, 1918, there had not been one moment which, properly exploited, promised so well for the establishment of a real agreement between the various branches of the South Slav people. The first acts of the new government were large with promise of good. The young King Peter, a pathetic orphaned figure, attracted all that was best in all parts of the country. The Prince Regent Paul, a scholarly, artistic man, had the reputation for being strongly pro-British, which was interpreted among the people of Yugoslavia as meaning pro-democratic. The other two Regents were mere cyphers, but it is important that neither of them had been seriously involved in politics before and had, therefore, no past to live down.

The Prince Regent Paul was politically unknown. King Alexander had never allowed him to mix



PLEASANT CHILDREN IN NATIONAL DRESS



himself in the political life of the country. His own interests had always been inclined rather to the study of art in Paris or literature in England than to the barren intrigues of Balkan political life. He knew little of the country, nothing of the peasants, who form eighty-five per cent of the people, and the whole backbone of the land. The Russian Revolution had robbed Prince Paul, whose mother was a Princess Demidov, one of the richest families in Tzarist Russia, of great wealth. He never understood the sentimental attachment of the Yugoslav peasants for Russia, even Soviet Russia, which is still regarded by them all as the "Great Brother of the Slavs."

Prince Paul began well. He steadfastly refused to declare martial law or allow a military dictatorship—either of which might have been considered necessary at the moment, but would have caused bad feeling. A really brilliant stroke was the amnesty of all political prisoners except those charged with being communist. Among those released was Dr. Matchek, leader of the greater part of the Croatian masses. Thirdly, his choice of Premier, Boshka Yevtitch, was highly popular. Yevtitch made a declaration of policy which raised high hopes. Although it was said to be based on the 1931 Constitution it claimed to desire the co-operation of all elements in the State and promised reorganisation and a considerable measure of decentralisation of the administration. It was also a popular idea to hold elections as soon

as possible, although the retention of the bad election law linked with the 1931 Constitution made a bad impression.

To the casual observer it might have appeared that Yevtitch had won a great victory when at the elections of May 5th, 1935, he secured, according to the official figures, 1,747,037 votes as compared with 1,076,364 obtained by the joint opposition headed by Dr Matchek. In reality, to anyone who knows the meaning and methods of Balkan elections, it was a bad flop. Yevtitch, I believe, was an honest man keen to retain power so that he could carry through a policy he considered essential to the country. But many of his supporters were the worst type of Balkan politician and during this election they resorted to all the tricks which complete control of the civil service and the local administration made possible. It was quite certain that every single person who was not violently opposed to voting for Yevtitch voted for him. The million odd voters who abstained from voting, in a country where everyone is politically minded and feeling was at that moment running very high, could be counted as having voted against the Government. The election campaign had been extremely one sided. The Government had monopolised the press, the radio, the issue of pamphlets and leaflets and even the use of hoardings. Not one word of opposition propaganda had been allowed and even their meetings had often been broken up.

Finally, it has to be remembered that in most European countries all civil servants, and these include often all railway workers, miners in State mines and all employees of local and provincial governments, a huge body of voters, must automatically vote for the government. The system of open voting made this all the more sure under the election law of 1931.

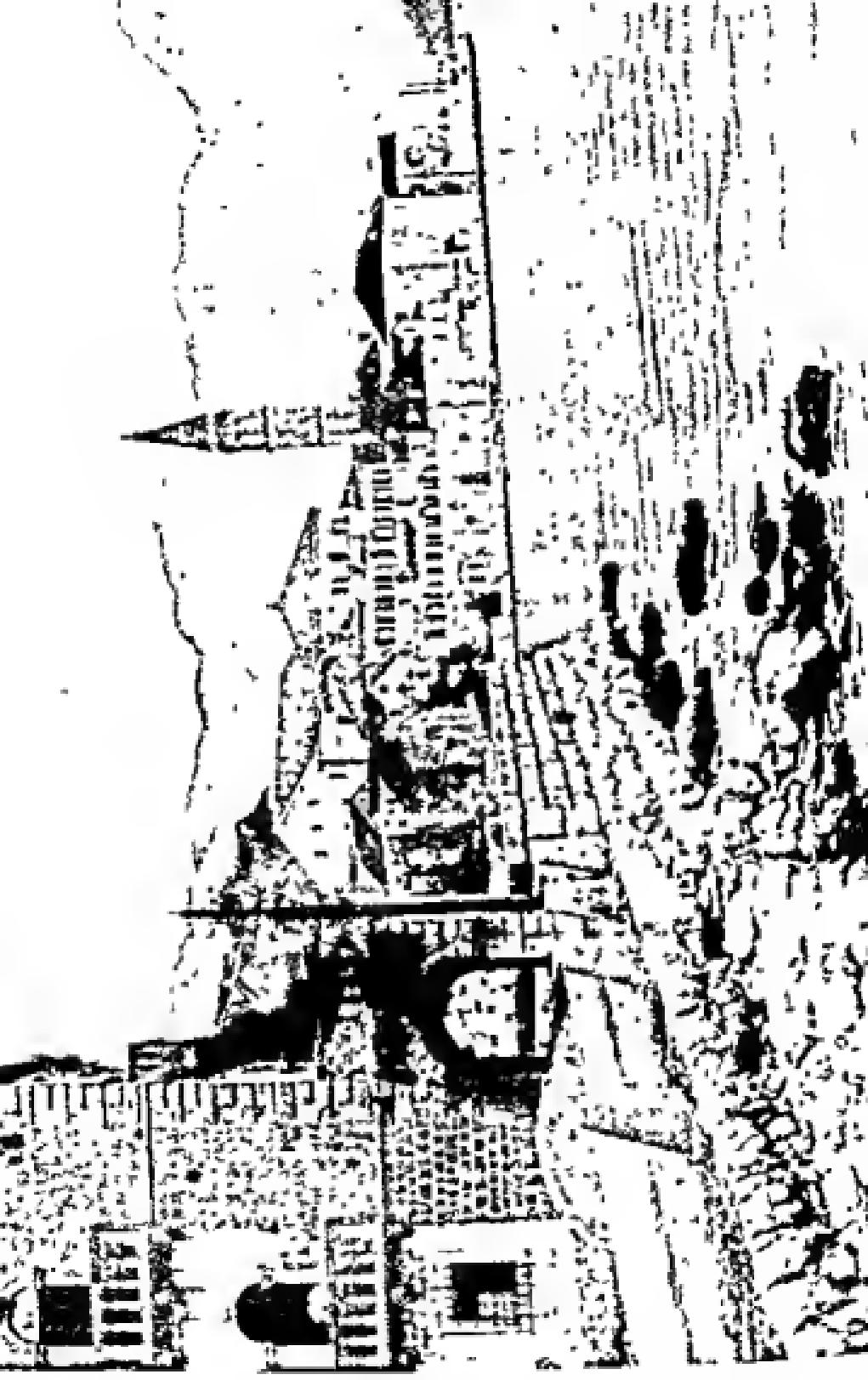
Thus although Yevtitch obtained 303 seats in the new Parliament, and the opposition only 67, as the election law provided that the party with a majority automatically received two-thirds of the seats and then a share of the others, everyone was fully aware that he had been defeated and was in a complete minority in the country.

Five months earlier, when he came to power, Yevtitch had been welcomed as an exponent of democratic principles. With the whole country behind him united in their sorrow at the recent loss of their King he had infinite possibilities of success. The Croats were ready to take the minimum of concessions in the settlement of their claims and the merest gesture in the direction of democracy would have won the support of the Serbian masses. Thanks largely to the destructive influence of his friends, the Minister of Interior, Velja Popovitch, and the Minister of Justice, Dr. Koyitch, he lost all his popularity and became in this short time an isolated figure, unsupported save by place-seekers, unpopular throughout the whole country.

Fortunately the Regency realised the danger of the situation Yevtitch was overthrown, the mass of his supporters in Parliament deserted him and followed Dr Stoyadinovitch, who had himself been elected on the Yevtitch list, but who had turned against his leader and accepted for himself the post of Premier.

Stoyadinovitch was a clever financier and politician. He combined the two roles to his own advantage. When he was adviser on credits to a British banking concern in Belgrade it was notorious that any member of his own party, the Radical Party, could get credit from the bank whatever his financial position, whereas Democrats who were as sound financially as the Bank of England were refused credits. The bank lost a lot of money—but Stoyadinovitch became Minister of Finance in Pashutch's cabinet. He had now an excellent opportunity to improve relations between the various parties in the State. During King Alexander's dictatorship he had gone into open opposition—almost to the point of becoming Republican—and as a result he was regarded as likely to put an end to all the unpopular features of the regime of January 6th, 1929, while retaining that which was good.

Just at this time Dr Matchek, under the influence of the wave of patriotic feeling aroused by the murder of King Alexander, came to Belgrade for the



first time of his own free will since the death of Raditch. (He had been brought in chains once in the meantime to be sentenced to three years' imprisonment.) Some months earlier I had had a long interview with Matchek in Zagreb. When I told Sir Nevile Henderson what Matchek had said he arranged for me to see Prince Paul and tell him. At first he appeared rather displeased with Dr. Matchek's attitude—reasonable enough though it appeared to Sir Nevile and to me—but later he took a different view. Now for the first time he called Matchek to see him. Matchek declared himself very satisfied with the interview. During this visit to Belgrade Matchek also conferred with the leaders of the Serbian opposition parties, Davidovitch, Dragoljub Yovanovitch and others in his capacity as leader of the joint opposition. It is believed that on that occasion he agreed to Stoyadinovitch taking office in order to pass through parliament new and more liberal election laws, and laws regulating the press (giving increased freedom), the formation of parties and the holding of meetings.

Stoyadinovitch started off very well. He secured the support of Dr. Spaho, leader of the Bosnian Moslems, who broke away from the United Opposition to take a place in the new cabinet, and of Father Koroshetz, who was made Minister of Interior. He had also the good fortune of a series of good harvests, which enabled the balance of trade

to be restored, the stability of the dinar to be maintained, and kept the peasants busy and satisfied. But as the years passed and the long promised return to democratic institutions and to comparative liberty of press and conversation were not fulfilled, when instead the Stoyadinovitch government, with Father Koroshetz as Minister of Interior, began to use force to suppress the growing expression of opposition opinion, the age old spirit of liberty of the Serb and Croat people, which had kept them struggling for freedom for many centuries, reasserted itself and opposition assumed formidable proportions.

One of the worst mistakes of the period, and I believe it was not due to Dr Stoyadinovitch, who always asserted that in foreign policy he merely obeyed orders from a higher authority, was the forcing through an unwilling parliament of a new Concordat which the Serbian people strongly opposed and even the Croatian people did not want.

It must be realised that in Serbia the Orthodox Church is not merely a religious but a most powerful national force. The whole history of the liberation of Serbia from foreign oppression was inextricably linked up with its church. The churches had been the meeting places where risings were planned against the Turks and the priests had often led the rebels into action. The Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church at that time had himself been a comitadji, had worn the skull and crossbones

badge, and spent his summers fighting the infidels in the forests and mountains and his winters studying theology at St. Petersburg Theological School.

Rightly or wrongly (and unfortunately the rights or wrongs of an argument do not often affect its political effects) the Orthodox Church believed that the proposed Concordat would give the Catholic Church and the Italian Cardinals too much power over education, and too free a hand in appointing padres for the army to be just or safe. The old Concordat had been declared by experts to be the most favourable Concordat to be signed with the Vatican by any sovereign power. That had been unimportant when Serbia had a negligible Catholic minority. But the new Concordat was infinitely more favourable than the old one, and was of vital importance as one-third of the Yugoslav population were Catholic.

The Orthodox Church having fought for centuries for liberty—both religious and political—was also in touch with the powerful political opposition forces in Serbia. The two joined forces for a tremendous attack on the government over the Concordat. In the meanwhile Dr. Matchek issued a statement that he and his party had no interests in the Concordat being signed. It was known in fact that he was against it as it would have favoured the growth of a clerical party in Croatia, of which he was afraid.

Why the Government having shown no interest

in the Concordat for years should so suddenly have insisted on its signature at this moment and in face of such tremendous opposition is not yet certain—although some very interesting theories have been put forward which I will not mention here. It did however play into the hands of Stoyadinovitch's enemies by giving them a popular cause in which to oppose him.

Two thousand priests and many thousands of political agitators belonging to the opposition parties worked on the masses of the Serb and peasants. The students of Belgrade University, sent home after a long series of anti government demonstrations spread throughout the length and breadth of the land carrying on the same propaganda. The situation in the interior became serious. The peasants began carrying arms and the gendarmes were often unable to deal with their meetings and had to let them proceed despite orders to disperse them.

To add to the danger the Patriarch Varnava fell mysteriously ill. The story was spread that he had been poisoned by the Government because of his powerful opposition to the Concordat. Stupid though it may seem, this story was believed widely throughout the whole land. An attempt was made to hold a Litany for the health of the Patriarch. The Constitution gives the churches the full right to carry out their various religious services. Such a Litany was a recognised service of the Orthodox

Church. Yet the police decided to prevent it. As many of the Serbian gendarmes refused to raise a hand against the Orthodox priests, Catholic gendarmes from Zagreb and Slovenia were brought in by the Minister of Interior, Father Koroshetz, who had set his heart on the Concordat being signed.

When the Litany, led by the aged Bishop of Shabatz, with a group of priests in their picturesque costumes and carrying the sacred banners which had been carried into action for centuries against the Turks, set out from the Belgrade Cathedral (first church to be allowed to be built in Belgrade during the Turkish regime) they were attacked without mercy by the strong forces of gendarmes drawn up to stop their passage. Their followers were broken up and dispersed by cruel blows from rubber truncheons and the butts of rifles. The Bishop of Shabatz was injured, the crosses and banners were broken and torn in the fray and finally after a gallant stand the priests were forced to return to the Cathedral.

There was a dramatic race between death and the passing of the Concordat. The Patriarch lay on the point of death. But the Government still insisted on rushing the Concordat through parliament in which it had a huge automatic majority. The Church threatened to excommunicate any Orthodox members who voted for the Bill. There were tremendous scenes in the Skupshtina when news of the battle

before the Cathedral reached the House. The first reading of the Bill was forced through after many violent speeches against it by only 166 votes to 128. Many members abstained from voting. Tension was such that two Orthodox members fainted and had to be carried out as the moment arrived when they had to decide either to oppose their own political party or to oppose their own national church.

Every day there were violent demonstrations in Belgrade and throughout the whole of Serbia. Attempts by the Bishops to get in touch with Prince Paul to secure his intervention failed. Finally the Bill was rushed through its second and third readings and was ratified by Parliament. A few hours later the Patriarch died.

All day and all night streams of men, women and children in tears filed past the coffin of the Patriarch lying in state in the Cathedral. Prince Paul came from Slovenia to kiss the ikon on the coffin and light a candle to be placed at the Patriarch's head. He came alone save for the Minister of the Court for he had been warned that if any of the members of the Cabinet responsible for the ratification of the Concordat came with him they would be turned out of the Church as the Minister of Justice, Subotitch had been the night before. That day the Hierarchical Council signed the papers excommunicating all ministers and members of parliament who voted for or worked for the ratification. Two members of

the Skupština who had voted for ratification, who came to the Patriarch's Palace to sign the book, were severely mauled by the crowd, especially the women-folk who tore their hats and coats to shreds. The reading of the excommunication order in the churches throughout the country was attended by violent demonstrations against the Government. Attempts to crush these out by force led to considerable bloodshed and the country—Serbia, at least—was on the verge of revolution. On the day of the funeral of the Patriarch there were riots in Belgrade and Sarajevo, during which many people were injured. The police cleared the streets by bayonet charges and mounted police charged the crowds. The funeral was most impressive. The coffin was drawn by comitadjis in Serbian national dress and was followed by six hundred priests in richly embroidered vestments.

The next weeks were highly dangerous for the Regency and the regime. Father Koroshetz gave orders that all meetings of protest were to be ruthlessly stamped out. He drafted large numbers of Catholic gendarmes from Croatia and Slovenia into the Shumadia. Every Sunday for weeks there were clashes between police and peasants. On several occasions the police fired into the crowd, killing and injuring many people. At some places, however, the crowd was armed with sawn-off shotguns, home-made hand grenades, axes and other weapons. The

police wisely withdrew and allowed the meetings to take place. Attempts by Djura Yankovitch, Minister of Propaganda, to hold meetings to protest against the Church were broken up by huge and well armed crowds. There was even danger of a march on Belgrade, but this the majority of the Bishops did not want. The worst of it all was that Prince Paul, having no direct contact with his people and accepting police reports as a hundred per cent correct did not believe reports of the danger and was assured that any disorder which did occur was due to "communism." Actually it was the very forces which a few weeks ago overthrew Prince Paul and rose in revolt against the signing of the Axis Pact which were also on the point of revolt at that time.

Stoyadinovitch had learned one great lesson from his early patron, Nikola Pashitch. That was to leave a dangerous situation to calm itself before doing anything. He went away for a holiday and then went abroad on a diplomatic tour. In the meanwhile the Church opposition began to crack, and the situation became less strained.

At this time one of the most hopeful signs for many years was given by the opposition leaders of all parties in Belgrade coming to an agreement with the opposition parties in Zagreb. The agreement was as follows. The abolition of the present constitution, made without popular consent and not democratic in principle. The appointment of a new

government to carry on provisionally until a new election law has been passed and elections held. This government would be composed of representatives of all parties in the country which have any popular foundation. It would pass a series of "foundation laws" which would fill the gap until the new constitution is drawn up and agreed. These laws would guarantee the monarchy, parliamentarism, the unity of the State and the liberties of the individual.

This agreement was signed by Ljuba Davidovitch, Misha Trifunovitch (Serbian Radical), Vlatko Matchek, Dr. Vilder (Serbs of Croatia), Dr. Nintchitch (Serb Radical), Yovan Yovanovitch (Serbian Peasant Party) and Milan Gavrilovitch (Serbian Peasant Party). All of these still alive were members of the government formed after the Patriots' Revolt. This was a great moment, for it was the first time since the death of Stjepan Raditch that an agreement had been reached between Serbs and Croats. It showed that the days when even the most intense popular discontent could shake the unity of the State were passed. It showed also that the forces of democracy, feared and suppressed by successive Belgrade governments as a disruptive force, were really the strongest force for real union in the country.

The Regency refused to consider the proposals of the United Opposition. The Prince took the line that King Alexander had handed the country to him in trust for the young King and that it must be

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banded over just as he had received it He could not therefore take responsibility for any constitutional changes He wanted, as it were, to keep the country in cold storage and stop any constitutional developments until the King came of age, seven years after he became Regent The opposition replied that there was nothing in the Prince's trust to prevent him from allowing improvements in the state of the country, so that he handed over a contented and united land instead of one torn by embittered dissensions and sick with hope too frequently deferred

Prince Paul did, however, realise that something must be done about the Croatian question He kept on Milan Stoyadinovitch for some months longer, and urged him to try to make an agreement with the Croats Stoyadinovitch thought he could do it. He is a big, genial fellow of the successful business man type, a one time teacher of dancing, and he thought that his famous smile, plus offers of various concessions, and a little flattery thrown in, with the hint of force in the background, would surely overcome the scruples of a small, insignificant looking man like Matchek He tried all his wiles, flattered, cajoled, threatened, intrigued with other Croatian leaders Nothing availed Finally Stoyadinovitch was removed from office, later to be arrested and interned on charges of having tried to sell his country to a foreign power

The place of Stoyadinovitch was taken by Tzvetkovitch, a dark-skinned, almost gypsy-like man of little intellectual capacity who had achieved a certain position as a provincial "political boss."

Tzvetkovitch realised that here was a chance to make a great name for himself in the history of his country. He set himself seriously to the task of making an agreement with the Croats. On instructions from Prince Paul, which laid down exactly what concessions he could make, he met Dr. Matchek several times and finally produced an agreement on the lines indicated from above, to which he and the Croatian leader were both prepared to agree. The concessions offered the Croats were fairly substantial and involved the granting of autonomy to the whole of the Croatian people within frontiers drawn on a generous scale. Matchek admitted to me later that it was more than he had ever hoped for.

To the astonishment of Tzvetkovitch and Matchek, the Prince refused to sign this agreement. Conditions at home and abroad had changed since he had given instructions for the agreement to be made, the danger of European war, which had seemed imminent, had receded. A little later when new danger threatened instructions were given for a new agreement, very much less liberal. Again Matchek and Tzvetkovitch had long talks, every point of dispute was referred as it arose to the Prince Regent and an agreement was arrived at which, though not so satisfactory as

the first one commanded the signatures of both parties

Once again when this agreement was brought to the palace the Prince refused to sign it although every detail therein had had his sanction beforehand. On a small technical point referring to half a dozen Serbian villages which would have been included in Croatia at a certain point, a minor matter ~~s~~ ~~as~~ under any circumstances some half million Serbs must always remain scattered throughout Croatia, the Prince demanded a completely new agreement. Matchek offered immediately to give way on the question of the six villages but the offer was refused and new negotiations with new instructions were begun. It says much for the patience of Matchek and his Croatian Peasant supporters that they consented for a third time to meet Tzvetkovitch.

I saw Matchek at his home farm just outside Zagreb just as the third agreement had been taken to the Prince for his approval. He told me himself the history of the two earlier attempts and the reason for their failure. He said and gave me full permission to publish the statement. If an agreement is not reached this time it will not be Tzvetkovitch's fault. I have found him a reasonable man with a sincere desire to reach an agreement. It will not be my fault. I have done everything possible to reach a just settlement. The fault will lie with a higher power which has twice already

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rejected agreements reached on the basis of its own instructions."

The interview with Matchek, with whom I have always had a cordial friendship, was published in the *News Chronicle*. Three days later I was ordered to leave the country, although in the meanwhile I had interviewed Tzvetkovitch, who declared himself delighted with the Matchek interview. But this time the agreement was signed.

So far as the internal situation of Yugoslavia is concerned a happy ending has been reached. On the basis of the agreement giving a considerable measure of autonomy to the Croats national unity had at last been fully secured, despite all the machinations of foreign enemies and all the mistakes of overkeen nationalists, who confused centralism with strength. A few months longer and the young King would have come of age, September 6th, 1941. It was fully expected that he would restore the political liberties of his people and complete the happy story of a people who had, after much strife and many dangers found their soul in peace, prosperity and democracy.

Alas, this was not to be! It was to be in war and revolt that the Yugoslav people were to find, once again, their soul.

YUGOSLAVIA AND HER  
NEIGHBOURS

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## YUGOSLAVIA AND HER NEIGHBOURS

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IN 1918, when many of her people had been fully mobilised for a period of nearly eight years without a break, there was nothing so necessary to the young Yugoslav State as peace in which to develop her political, social and economic life. It was the constant threats to peace which came from outside which caused many of her internal difficulties. Democratic liberties were too often abused by neighbours, who used bogus "minority" parties to further their own ends by trying to weaken and divide the country. The most persistent and serious of these threats came from Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria.

We have seen that the Allies were not so sure how far they welcomed the sudden and rather unexpected creation of the Yugoslav State. They had all sorts of commitments to Italy and elsewhere which made it rather inconvenient. Italy had occupied considerable territories promised to her by the secret Treaty of London, 1915, and it was difficult to ask her to quit. Finally, in order to secure peace and

and a dangerous and difficult situation Yugoslavia dropped many of the claims she had on ethnical grounds to territories inhabited by Slovenes and Croats stretching almost to Trieste, overlooked the occupation by D'Annunzio of Fiume, the natural port of all north Yugoslavia, and signed the Treaty of Rapallo. She left in Italy over half a million Slovenes and Croats, lost any rights in the magnificent port of Trieste, which had served most of the Austrian territories to which she was now part heir, and gave up also the ports of Fiume, and Zadar (Zara), to which she had an excellent claim. She also lost the islands of Lagossa, Plegosa and Lissa, which Italy retained on purely strategic grounds.

While the Rapallo Treaty settled in a rough and ready way the outstanding problems between the two countries and allowed them to begin their post war reconstruction, it left a number of festering thorns in the side of Yugoslavia. The half million odd Slovenes and Croats in Istria were continually being maltreated by the Italians in their systematic attempt to denationalise all minorities within their frontiers. Zadar and the Italian islands were constantly used as centres for smuggling, not only goods and currency into Yugoslavia, but also political agitators, paid assassins, and subversive literature. And although she had obtained considerably more territory than she would have been granted by any objective judge, far more for instance than would have been granted

by President Wilson's memorandum, Italy was never satisfied with the treaty and hankered after Dalmatia and the sole possession and control of the Adriatic Sea. While a democratic and liberal regime still ruled in Italy there were possibilities of agreement, but the ultra-nationalism-cum-militarism of the Fascist Dictatorship meant the repeated opening of the old wounds and the constant fear of aggression.

Apart from her territorial claims Italy feared a strong Yugoslavia. A united, well organised Yugoslavia would stand in the way of Italian domination of the Balkans. Moreover, Italy knew the virtue of the Croats and the Serbs as soldiers and feared them, especially, in alliance with France.

Apart from her constant schemes to break up Yugoslavia by stirring up internal strife, by financing, training, and supporting Croatian extremist refugees, Italy also planned to surround Yugoslavia with enemy States allied to herself. She built up thus her alliance with Hungary and with Bulgaria. This was behind her support for Hungarian claims to recover territories lost to Yugoslavia as a result of the Peace Treaties, behind the Italo-Bulgarian Royal marriage, and behind the constant support in money, arms and organisation given by Italy to the Bulgarian "Macedonian Revolutionary Committee."

Austria had little quarrel with the frontiers between herself and Yugoslavia. There was some dispute as to possession of Maribor (Marburg), but when

Austria, as a result of a plebiscite, secured the Klagenfurt Basin, with over 100,000 Slovene inhabitants, it was generally considered that the frontiers were satisfactory. Vienna remained in many ways, for some years, the real capital of the Balkans, especially as regards trade and news. It was a mistake of many British firms and newspapers that they preferred representatives in Vienna, sometimes of doubtful nationality, to deal with their Yugoslav interests rather than to send direct representatives to Zagreb or Belgrade themselves.

Hungary was the most disgruntled country in Europe after the war, and the most successful in her propaganda against the Peace Treaties. The similarity in her social and economic system, a feudal land system producing a rich aristocracy, a highly capitalised industry producing wealthy people who intermarried with and aped the aristocracy, and an aptitude for and love of sport made many English people fall for Hungarian propaganda. They rarely liked the Yugoslavs, a peasant people with few rich families who could entertain visitors royally, as did the Hungarians, and with no realisation of the need to present their excellent case in an attractive manner. Hungary was thus able to obtain large loans from her ex-enemies for the development of her industry, agriculture and her incessant propaganda, while Serbia, the gallant ex ally, could get little or no help in reorganising her war wrecked land. Hungary



claimed in her wildest moments the Croatian Coast, including Fiume, the whole of Croatia, and the greater part of the Vojvodina. When Yugoslavia looked stronger and more solid these claims were often whittled down, for the moment, to a mere frontier revision covering a few towns such as Subotitza and a dozen villages. But whereas the Hungarians hated and despised the Rumanians, who had occupied their land and been granted large territories to which they laid claim only after the Hungarians had laid down their arms, they did respect the military virtues of the Serbs and bore far less grudge against them than against any of the other Succession States. At times there even seemed to be good ground for real understanding between the two States, but these were always wrecked by outside forces.

With Rumania there were at first disputes as to the possession of the Banat district, but a compromise was soon arranged whereby Yugoslavia gave up the Temesvar district, claimed only on historical grounds. The need for common defence against Hungary and Bulgaria led later to the development of a close alliance between the two States.

Bulgaria was, at the beginning, one of the most difficult problems. The Bulgars had twice attacked Serbia in the back, and twice been severely beaten as a result and had lost considerable territories. With the exception of a small strip of land which

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Yugoslavia needed for the purely strategic reason that it made the Belgrade Salonika railway line safe, the territories gained by Yugoslavia were all lands to which she had the best historic claims of all, lands which had been the very heart of Tzar Dushan's Serbian Empire. From an ethnical point of view Yugoslavia had quite as good a claim, if not better, than Bulgaria to these lands.

When Stambuliski came to power at the head of the Bulgarian Peasant Party relations improved enormously. Indeed Stambuliski was working for the uniting of the whole South Slav race, including therein the Bulgars, in one big federal country. He got much popular support in Yugoslavia, for the Serbian peasants have a deep regard for the Bulgarian peasants, whom they regard as brothers, and Raditch, the Croatian Peasant leader, hoped that the inclusion in Yugoslavia of the Bulgars, who were excellently organised on a class, peasant basis (whereas the Serbs were organised on purely party lines not based on class but on the personality of the leaders) would result in a majority in the country for a peasant government. It may be this which prevented Stambuliski from getting much official support for his scheme.

King Boris, to save his dynasty, allowed a group of reactionaries to stage a revolution against Stambuliski with the aid of the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee. These professional assassins, among the most

bloodthirsty in Europe, killed off some 12,000 of the leaders of the Bulgarian Peasant Party, mostly priests, teachers and other "intellectuals" and including the leader Stambuliski, who was most brutally murdered. This brought the Macedonian Revolutionaries into power in Sofia and began an era in which there was almost daily bloodshed on the frontiers or inside Yugoslavia, when their agents, with amazing courage, penetrated far into South Serbia, blew up railway lines, and government property, and murdered hundreds of the most popular and most efficient civil servants, police officers and army officers.

Apart from the question of the free zone which had been guaranteed to Yugoslavia in Salonika harbour and which was not satisfactorily arranged for many years, there were few questions at issue between Yugoslavia and Greece.

From a strategic point of view the frontier with Albania was fairly satisfactory from the Yugoslav point of view. The only important point at issue was possession of Skadar (Scutari), which had been often in Montenegrin hands in the long history of their fight to maintain their liberty. It was given by the Peace Treaties to Albania. But as there were admittedly large numbers of Albanians who had come down from the mountains into the plains of South Serbia when these were partially emptied of population by the Turkish invasion, matters were fairly even. The Albanians in Yugoslavia had no

national feeling, there was little enough of it even in Albania itself, and did not present a serious problem from a minority point of view. They were, however, exploited at a later date by the Italians, who worked to obtain full control of Albania so as to be able to close the Adriatic at the Straits of Taranto, and also to be able to threaten Yugoslavia at her most vital spot, the Plain of Kosovo and the railway to Salonika, from the dominating heights.

Whatever may be said of King Alexander's internal policy, it must be admitted that his foreign policy, which he directed from the beginning himself, was masterly and effective. He set about the task of assuring his country the external peace which was a condition precedent to internal consolidation, with vigour and patience—a rare combination of qualities. Time after time his efforts were ruined by the conflicting interests of his envious and rapacious neighbours.

Under the orders of the King, Dr Nintchitch, Foreign Minister, negotiated with Italy a new convention which should end the bickerings which persisted after the Treaty of Rapallo. In 1924 a "pact of friendship" was signed, and in 1925 the Nettuno Conventions, designed to end all outstanding disputes by giving numerous concessions to Italy, were initialled. In 1926 the Italians suddenly announced the signature of the Tirana Pact, which definitely proved that Italy had been secretly working against

the independence of Albania. Nintchitch resigned from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a sign that his work of the last four years for peace with Italy had failed.

But King Alexander did not despair. He first of all sent Dr. Marinkovitch, the new Foreign Minister, to conclude in France a new pact of friendship to offset Italy's hostility, redoubled activities in connection with the building up of a powerful Little Entente between Czecho-Slovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia, as a protection against Hungary, and entered into negotiations for a new Commercial Treaty with Greece. He even, though it went greatly against his prejudices, sent his favourite Minister abroad, Balugdjitch, from Rome to Berlin, where he had at an earlier date, on the King's instructions, had contact with the Soviet Russian representative. There was even talk at the time of a Commerical Treaty with Russia, a project which won enthusiastic support from Zagreb newspapers and also from the Vojvode Stepa Stepanovitch, who reminded his people of their debt of gratitude to Russia "without whom we should with difficulty have freed ourselves from the Turks and but for whom the Austrians would certainly have swallowed us."

At this time the situation in Yugoslavia was made even more difficult by the rise of the fascist movement in Austria and suggestions that Italy was prepared to re-create some sort of Austro-Hungarian

State under her own protection to secure her own domination over the Balkans. In July, 1928, the Pact of Friendship, as it was entitled though little enough friendship existed, between Italy and Yugoslavia, had to be either renewed or denounced. Italy demanded the ratification of the Nettuno Conventions, which would lay the whole of western Yugoslavia open to her for economic exploitation, as the price of the renewal of the Pact. It was the Yugoslav Government's keen desire to secure better relations with Italy, despite the daily reports of outrages against Slovene and Croat people and institutions in Istria, which led him to bring these ill fated Conventions before the Skupština for ratification at a time when party feeling was already strained almost to breaking point. There were violent student demonstrations against the ratification in Belgrade and elsewhere. In Belgrade students who demonstrated barricaded themselves in the Ruski Tzar café and a battle royal in which several people were severely injured took place with the police, who had orders at all cost to suppress the demonstrations.

It was this attempt at all costs to push the Nettuno Conventions through Parliament which led to the situation in which Stjepan Raditch and his friends were killed.

Yugoslav public opinion at this time was violently against the ratification of the Conventions. The Belgrade *Politika* stated that while it was clear what

enormous sacrifices Yugoslavia was making by ratification it was not clear what benefits they would obtain. Doubt was expressed as to whether Italy would abandon her policy of trying to isolate Yugoslavia and to secure domination of the Balkans by interfering in Albania, Bulgaria and Greece and assisting the Hungarians in their struggle against the Trianon Treaty. The task of trying to get the Conventions ratified was made all the harder by Fascist demonstrations in Zadar and elsewhere, demanding the return of "Italian Dalmatia."

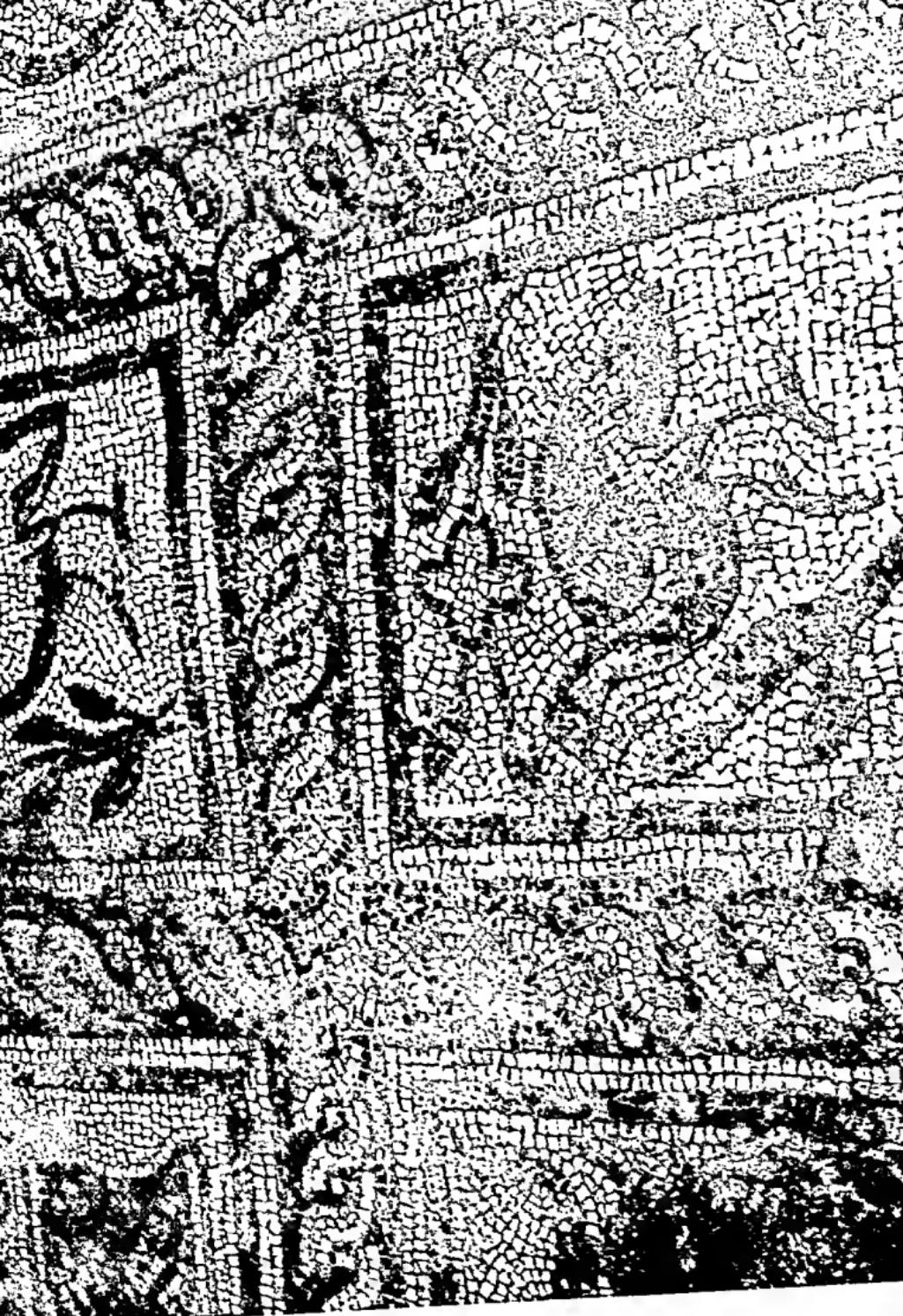
Despite all these obstacles and a renewed campaign in Istria forcibly to denationalise the Slav population in November of that fatal year 1928, the Nettuno Conventions were ratified, signed by the King and delivered to Mussolini.

After January 6th, 1929, King Alexander devoted himself more keenly than ever to trying to establish more firmly friendly relations with all neighbours. An agreement was made almost immediately with Greece about the Salonika zone and the use of the Djevdjelija railway. A meeting was called at Pirot of the mixed Yugoslav-Bulgarian Commission to settle frontier problems and try to prevent in future incidents such as had led in 1927 to the closing of the frontier. Better relations with Bulgaria had been encouraged by the generosity shown to the people of Bulgaria early in 1928 when an earthquake led to much suffering among the people of Bulgarian

Macedonia. That had been a remarkable demonstration that despite the terrorist activities of the Macedonian Revolutionaries a real spirit of brotherhood does exist between these two kindred peoples, who are of the same religion and speak practically the same tongue.

Despite the signing of the Nettuno Conventions, the unconditional reopening of the Bulgar frontier, and the Pirot meeting, Italy continued her game of encouraging Macedonian comitadjis in their attacks on Yugoslavia. Vantcha Mihailov, now one of Hitler's agents in the Balkans, made at this time a visit to Rome. On his return he bought a fine new motor-car and spent much money on renewed activities against Yugoslavia. The Bulgarian Government allowed him still to work freely in Sofia and even to tax all important firms in the city to raise funds for his arms and munitions. He entertained in Sofia the Croatian renegades Pavelitch and Perichetz, when they made violent speeches in public against Yugoslavia. Later he instigated a new series of outrages in the Tzanirod and Shtip districts.

During the next two years the King worked for the consolidation of relations between Yugoslavia and her neighbours. He met with endless rebuffs. In 1932 Italy began feverishly to fortify her eastern frontier. New roads were built along the Yugoslav frontier, trench systems were dug, big guns



STOBI. DETAIL OF MOSAIC

placed in position. Zadar was also hurriedly fortified. In Albania, little more than an Italian protectorate, naval bases were prepared which were absurd in view of the tiny size of the Albanian navy, fine motor roads were built to strategic points on the Greek and Yugoslav frontiers and Italian officers reorganised the Albanian army. Hungary and Bulgaria, both forbidden by the Peace Treaties to rearm, were doing so openly or with cynically slight cover. Bulgaria had hundreds of pilots trained for her "civil air force" which had only a dozen planes, "labour battalions" were created and trained to use rifles and machine-guns. Frontier incidents on the Italian, Hungarian and Bulgarian frontiers became increasingly common.

In the spring of 1933 danger reached its peak. Italian plots were disclosed to stir up war through a rising in North Albania, or if that failed through the activities of Croatian emigrés working from Fiume, Zadar, and Bari. Hungary and Bulgaria were reported to be ready to attack immediately from the north and east. Yugoslavia seemed isolated and in danger.

Alexander went to work again. He made a series of visits. As a result of his visit to Rumania the Little Entente Permanent Council accepted Benesh's fourteen points for the economic unification of the three countries, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Czechoslovakia. Properly followed up this should have

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resulted in the Little Entente becoming a Great Power with an area of some 685,000 square kms and a population of over 43,000,000 people. They had already a permanent Council of their three foreign ministers and military agreements as regards the standardisation of arms and units and plans for joint action in case of war.

The seal was set to a long series of friendly acts towards Bulgaria by the meeting of King Boris and King Alexander, for the first time in ten years, on Belgrade railway station. Their conversation was so cordial that the Orient Express was held up twenty minutes to allow it to be completed, and the kiss with which they parted showed how complete was their reconciliation. Later King Alexander made a tour of the Balkan lands touching on Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.

As a result of this tour a pact of friendship and non aggression was signed with Turkey—with whom Yugoslavia had been officially at war until December, 1925, as she refused to sign the Lausanne Treaty. A second result was the state visit of King Boris to Belgrade. This visit was marked by mass demonstrations in Bulgaria and in Yugoslavia for friendship between their kindred peoples. There was also a rapprochement with Greece and a distinct improvement of relations with Albania, which sent a delegation to Belgrade to negotiate a Treaty of Commerce.

In the beginning of 1934, a further step was taken in the consolidation of Yugoslavia's defences against aggression. Largely as a result of the work of King Alexander a Balkan pact was signed between Yugoslavia, Rumania, Greece and Turkey. This was intended to defend these four small countries from aggression from any non-Balkan power. It would also tend to frighten Bulgaria out of her dangerous alliances with Italy and Hungary against Yugoslavia—for it meant that she was entirely surrounded by friends and allies of Yugoslavia.

To remove any impression that this pact need disturb the friendly relations which the visit of King Boris, at Alexander's invitation, to Belgrade had inaugurated, the King sent his Premier Yevtitch to Sofia to make arrangements for his own state visit to the Bulgarian capital.

In the meantime Italy's attempts to work for the return of a Habsburg to the throne of Austria, under her own protection, had tended to drive Yugoslavia towards closer collaboration with Germany, which also opposed the return of the Habsburgs. Italian mobilisation on the Austrian frontier during the attempted Nazi revolt was therefore considered as unjustified. It must be remarked that King Alexander had never borne any animosity towards Germany after the 1914 war. He had indeed encouraged economic relations between the two countries and had succeeded better than most of the Allies in

getting considerable value from reparation payments in kind

The visit of King Alexander to Sofia was a tremendous triumph. It wiped out all the uneasiness which Bulgaria may have felt at the signing of the Balkan pact, but King Boris refused the offer, which Alexander is believed to have made to him, that Bulgaria should also join the pact.

Finally, to add one more triumph to his successes in the foreign field and one more bulwark against Italian aggression to the elaborate double system of defence of the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact, the King decided to visit France to sign a new pact of friendship, which would involve a new military alliance. Fresh from his victories in Sofia he reached Marseilles on his way to Paris. But the Italians, who were already greatly disturbed at the King's success, got in first. At Marseilles, in the midst of his triumphant reception, the King was killed by an Italian paid assassin.

The year 1935 was dominated by the reactions to the murder of Alexander. The danger from Italy was fortunately avoided by immediate British naval action. The solidity of the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact prevented any action from Hungary and Bulgaria. The defence system King Alexander had built up weathered the storm caused by his death.

The Belgrade Government was satisfied with the



success of their protest at Geneva against Hungarian support for the terrorists who killed the King. They were asked by Britain not to bring Italy into the affair, and in return Mr. Anthony Eden and the British delegation gave every help to secure a satisfactory settlement.

Prince Paul's Government, and it is believed that the Prince took as complete charge of foreign affairs as did King Alexander, followed a similar policy to that of King Alexander save that it was based rather on appeasement than on the organisation of safety through a complete system of alliances. Prince Paul, who had never been like his cousin, a warrior, was determined at all costs to avoid war. This was to be noticed for instance in the tacit agreement to Bulgarian rearmament by Germany given by allowing German military aeroplanes flying to Bulgaria to land at Belgrade *en route*. This despite the clauses of the Peace Treaty forbidding Bulgaria to have any military air force. It was expressed also in speeches by Stoyadinovitch stating that Yugoslavia refused to be the pawn of the Great Powers and would remain neutral in any future war.

In January, 1937, a "Pact of Eternal Friendship and Inviolable Peace" was signed between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in Belgrade. Even hospitable Belgrade surpassed itself in the welcome it gave the Bulgarian Premier and Foreign Minister. The terms of the pact, one of the shortest ever made, ran thus :

\* Art 1 There shall be inviolable peace and sincere and eternal friendship between the Yugoslav Kingdom and the Bulgarian Kingdom

Art 2 The present treaty shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification exchanged as soon as possible.'

The instruments of ratification were exchanged the very next day at the Bulgarian Legation. We have now some idea of the meaning of "eternal" in the Bulgarian vocabulary. Within little over four years of the royal signature of King Boris being put to this 'Pact of Eternal Friendship' the "inviolable" peace was broken by Bulgarian troops marching into Yugoslavia at the heels of German mechanised columns and occupying large areas of the most historical Serbian land.

It was at this time that a new tendency began to be visible to close observers in Yugoslav foreign policy. There had always, as I have mentioned, been the most correct relations between Germany and the Yugoslav Government. Now there began to be the deliberate favouring of German interests as compared with those of the democratic powers. Stoyadinovitch even toyed with the idea of a uniformed Nazi movement to maintain his power internally, but public opinion was far too strongly against this for him to proceed far with it. Economic ally the country was being put more and more deeply

into the power of Germany. Yugoslavia is not to blame for that.

At the bidding of the League of Nations, but really out of friendship for Britain, Yugoslavia had fully applied sanctions against Italy during the war in Abyssinia. This had meant great hardships as Italy had been Yugoslavia's best customer, buying up her large surplus of wheat, maize, cattle, timber, wood for fuel, and seeking also to get her copper, zinc, chromium and other minerals. Yugoslavia had already found difficulties in selling her products on the world market, already glutted with goods of the type she produced at lower prices than she could sell them. Britain and France had declared their willingness to ease the difficulties of states which applied sanctions. France, as Prince Paul pointed out to me, had kept her promise to the extent of buying eleven more horses than the year before—"Not a dozen," said the Prince bitterly, "just eleven!" Britain had done a little more, but whereas the dictator states could direct the purchasing power of their peoples in whatever direction they wanted for political purposes there was no machinery in Britain to force our traders to buy Yugoslav produce instead of cheaper and better materials from South America and elsewhere. The Government refused to make special provisions to enable adequate help to be given to such states as Yugoslavia. A million pounds a year spent in covering the difference

in price between Yugoslav and other produce and in organising trade with that country would have enabled Britain to become as important a purchaser of Yugoslav produce as Germany did become. The money spent would have returned to this country for the purchase of armaments—especially war 'planes—so that we should have built up a much larger war plane industry, and Yugoslavia would have been armed with our weapons instead of those of our enemies. But this would have aroused ill feeling in Germany, and Britain had already begun that policy of appeasement of the growing power of Germany which was to lead to the present situation.

As it was Germany stepped in very cleverly and bought up everything that Yugoslavia could sell. She could use unlimited stocks of wheat, maize, meat, butter, fats copper, zinc, lead timber—all that Yugoslavia could produce—for the building up of her war reserves, and what she could not use she could export through Holland in order to obtain good currency. All she had to pay was paid in goods.

Leica cameras, medical stores, machines of all types. And for safety's sake Germany always remained deeply in debt to Yugoslavia so that more and more supplies were forthcoming in the hope of getting payment for those already sent.

But the policy of the Stoyadinovitch Government went further even than economic need dictated. German visitors were made much of,



RASHIĆ'S OLD BELGRADE



those from democratic lands were treated coolly. Good propositions from Allied lands were turned down in favour of less favourable ones from Germany.

At this time I had a long talk with Prince Paul who was dissatisfied with the British press because it published news which showed up these tendencies in Yugoslav policy. He explained the situation of Yugoslavia very reasonably, hedged in with potential enemies, weak through internal disunion, therefore forced to avoid war at all costs, and so forced to appease the big states on her borders. Britain and France far away, and so far, as in the case of sanctions, unwilling to recompense those who sacrificed themselves in the common cause. But he assured me that Yugoslavia knew the dangers which threatened from Germany and Italy, and that if the worst should come and there should be war between Britain and Germany, Yugoslavia would undoubtedly be drawn in on the side of her old ally.

I asked permission to publish some sort of assurance to the British people on these lines. The Prince asked me to submit a suggested statement. But the statement I submitted was blue-pencilled and a colourless, meaningless communiqué substituted. The only sentence of value was this : "We have not only maintained and strengthened our existing alliances with our friends but have also improved our relations with those countries with whom difficulties existed in the past and which, we trust,

## THE SOUL OF YUGOSLAVIA

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will lead to real friendship. This will in no way prejudice our former ties. This statement was widely quoted with a certain amount of relief by the Greek, Turkish, Rumanian and Czech press—for it would be useless to deny that the tendency of Yugoslavia to make friends with her former enemies (and their potential enemies) Italy, Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria had caused some misgivings amoog the Balkan Pact and Little Entente countries. In Britain, and among British diplomats, this Yugoslav tendency aroused little interest and no concern.

In the meantime Stoyadinovitch was going very much further than the Prince's statement should have allowed. There was no doubt, it was said, that that genial old rogue was filling his pockets in the process. The lavishness of his personal expenditure and the variety and extent of his transactions abroad pointed to that. In private conversation he stated his policy in this way. If we go with Britain and France they will give us nothing (his attempts to raise loans in Paris had all failed) but Germany will then kick us good and hard and our allies will do nothing to help us. Look at the fate of Abyssinia and Spain. If we go with Germany she will help us by buying our goods. Britain and France will not kick us but may even in an attempt to buy us off offer us loans. From the point of view of a practical business man he could see only one possible policy to follow.

Stoyadinovitch followed this policy with skill and force. Within a few years he had virtually broken off the Treaty of Friendship with France, which had been King Alexander's last act, and had substituted in its place a Treaty of Friendship with Germany. He had reduced the Little Entente to impotence by his treatment of Czechoslovakia and his blunt warnings that in case she had trouble with Germany she could expect no help from Yugoslavia. When he was dismissed the explanation given privately to me was that he had gone too far along the path of friendship for Germany and had "made a policy of what should have been merely a tactical gesture." Later he was imprisoned on charges of having tried to sell his country. I remember a private talk I had with President Benesh at this time. He asked my opinion of Stoyadinovitch. I told him that in my opinion he was selling his country. Benesh replied, "Mr. Harrison, I believe from all the information I have from other sources, that you are right. But it is one thing to sell your country and another to deliver the goods." The Patriots' Revolt proved how sound was the Czech President's knowledge of Balkan affairs.

Italy joined her Axis colleague in exploiting the raw materials of the Balkan lands. She forgave Yugoslavia her part in the sanctions affair and offered to buy Yugoslav cattle and timber, the only products in which Yugoslavia had any considerable

surplus after she had satisfied Germany's rapacious appetite. It was as clear as the day to even the most ordinary man in the street in Belgrade by the end of 1937 that Germany and Italy were planning joint action which would inevitably lead to war in Europe.

Stoyadinovitch now made a Pact of Friendship and Non aggression with Italy. Thereby Yugoslavia acknowledged the *status quo* in Albania, the virtual Italian occupation of that natural mountain fortress overlooking the most vital parts of her land, agreed to prevent any irredentist work by Istrian Slav refugees in Yugoslavia and to break up their organisations and to muzzle her press as to any news unfavourable to Italy. Thus Italian defeats in Spain could not be mentioned, and a lecture which I was to have delivered on the campaign in Abyssinia was forbidden by the Minister of Interior, Father Koroshetz in person. In return Italy promised to buy more Yugoslav raw materials which she needed badly and which were at that time in good demand elsewhere but obtained the concession that she could pay for these goods through the clearing arrangement. She also promised to break up the camps of Croatian terrorists in which the murder of King Alexander was planned and to intern Pavlitch and other terrorist leaders. Incidentally Italy had up to then denied the existence of such camps and declared that she could not find 'Pavlitch.'

This agreement with Italy was made without previously consulting the Little Entente states—as should have been done in accordance with the terms of the Pact. This was but one of many similar smacks publicly administered to France and the little Entente by Stoyadinovitch. President Benesh's visit to Belgrade soon afterwards seemed outwardly a sign of Little Entente solidarity. But the disparity between the warmth of his reception by the public, despite attempts by the police to keep the time of his arrival secret and to prevent the hundreds of thousands of peasants who tried to come to greet him from entering the capital, and the coolness of his official reception, served only to show to all who cared to see that the Little Entente had been killed and that its only supporters in Yugoslavia were that same group of politicians who in internal affairs were agitating for the restoration of liberty and democracy, and the mass of the peasants who were behind them.

In April the Serbian Opposition leaders had published already the following communiqué :

"For some time fear has been growing among our people that Mr. Stoyadinovitch is leaving the tried foreign policy of our people which was determined in alliance with France and the countries of the Little Entente and in friendship with Britain and the lands of the Balkan Pact.

"Events of the last three months prove this fear

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to be well founded Leaving our former foreign policy, which fitted and still fits the sentiments of our people, the Stoyadinovitch government has joined the 'Rome Berlin Axis' and accepted their attitude on foreign affairs They accept the initiative of Rome and Berlin which has but one object—to separate Yugoslavia from her former allies

The régime began first to weaken the Little Entente When Mussolini at Milan supported the revision of the frontiers of Hungary a storm of protest followed from our allies Rumania and Czechoslovakia Our government, however, not only did not protest but prevented all mention of protest in our press

"We rejoice at any rapprochement with our brothers, the Bulgarian people, but consider the way chosen is not good The pact with Bulgaria gives no guarantee that our frontiers will be respected nor does it say that the new relationship must not weaken our obligations under the Balkan Pact

We realise the importance of good relations with Italy, our biggest neighbour But the treaty with Italy which foreshadows close political collaboration and perhaps even military collaboration, has been made at a time when Italy is at highly strained relations politically with our ally France and our friend Great Britain They are at issue with Italy on questions of vital interest to their countries and Italy will be strengthened in her attitude to them by this

treaty. It follows that France and Britain have been weakened—and with our help.

"Towards the League of Nations Stoyadinovitch's government has also adopted an attitude which changes our whole policy. Neither the pact with Bulgaria nor that with Italy mentions the obligations arising from the pact of the League of Nations. The Italian press stresses the fact that the agreement with Yugoslavia has been made outside the sphere of the League. Stoyadinovitch takes the same attitude to the League as Italy and Germany.

"In our land to-day Stoyadinovitch's government is carrying on foreign policy without any control from the public and without consideration for the needs and feelings of the nation. No criticism of the government's work is allowed. There is danger therefore that our allies and friends may lose from sight the fact that the policy of Stoyadinovitch's government expresses the feelings of only a small clique now in office. The nation is dead against such a policy and of this our allies and friends need have no doubt."

I quote this communiqué at some length because it shows that the policy of collaboration with the Axis was the work of a small clique and that the mass of the people, who were themselves struggling for liberty and democracy, were solidly on the side of the democratic powers. It was this feeling of the masses and their true leaders, the Opposition leaders,

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which laid the foundation for and made possible the Patriot's Revolt, which was at the last hour to save the honour of their country. It is unfortunate that the opinions of this mass of the people and of their leaders was completely neglected by the British Minister then in Belgrade, who refused all attempts to bring him into contact with the leaders of the people lest it should offend Prince Paul. A little help from Britain at that time might have led to the victory of the opposition and to changes of policy in Yugoslavia which would have made that country ready and able to withstand the attack which later she had to face unarmed and unprepared.

When the scandals of Stoyadinovitch's regime became too apparent he was dismissed in disgrace. The new Premier was a man with little knowledge of foreign affairs and a complete "Yes man" in internal policy. The new Foreign Minister was Tantzer Markovitch former Minister in Berlin, of whom his own relatives said he was more German than Yugoslav and even spoke German better than his own tongue. Markovitch had been greatly impressed by what he had seen of the Nazi strength while in Berlin. It was confidently to be expected that he would continue the policy of Stoyadinovitch, but more discreetly.

The Munich crisis was the great testing time of governments and peoples. The Yugoslav government came out of it badly. They let it be known



KING ALEXANDER WELCOMED BY HIS PEOPLE



quite clearly that despite all the obligations of the Little Entente they would give no aid to Czechoslovakia if she were attacked by Germany. The Yugoslav people came out well. One hundred thousand men, including army generals and even young schoolboys, rushed to the Czech Legation to volunteer for service in the Czech army. Violent public manifestations in favour of the Czechs took place throughout the land despite ruthless attempts by the police to suppress them.

When war broke out the pressure of the Germans and Italians was intensified. They demanded more and more supplies of every sort of commodity. Yugoslavia had to institute meatless days to secure a surplus to supply to Germany, she had to take the proceeds of the French copper mines and the British lead-zinc mines from their lawful owners and place them at the disposal of Germany and Italy. She deprived her own people of fats that Germany might fill her stores. The Yugoslav government, under Tzvetkovitch and Markovitch, refused nothing that was asked of them.

The storm of public protest grew more and more intense. When it was reported that the Premier and Foreign Minister were going finally to Vienna to sign the Axis Pact and range themselves against the allies who had helped to bring Yugoslavia into being, numbers of high army officers resigned and many tried to escape to Greece to offer their services

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against Italy. Despite this intense public feeling the Government, driven by their fear of the terrible military machine whose effects in Poland, the Low lands, Belgium and France they had just witnessed, decided to sign the pact, hoping thereby to retain some measure of neutrality as a reward.

But the tide of democratic feeling and the deep sense of honour of the Serbian people could not stand this final disgrace. They knew that their army had been starved of supplies to fill the pockets of the politicians, they knew that the army had for many months been prepared for capitulation instead of for battle, they knew that Britain was distant and that the possibilities of her sending effective help in 1941 were infinitely smaller than they had been in 1914. But the Serbs are no calculating friends who count the profit and the loss of loyalty to their allies. They rose in the night to overthrow the government which had betrayed them, they cast the offending ministers into prison and drove out the Prince who had tolerated them, they brought the young King from his bed and placed him on his father's throne, they laid down their lives in thousands for the cause of liberty and democracy. Let it not be forgotten when the day of reckoning comes.

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Little is known as yet of the campaign which led to the capitulation of the main Yugoslav armies and

the flight of the young King and his government from the country.

The Germans adopted their usual tactics. They had their Quislings in important posts in many places. There was not time to find them all out and throw them from office. These undoubtedly did much damage to the Yugoslav defence. The Nazis had had thousands of "tourists" exploring the Balkans every summer for years. They had examined every possible route by which the latest types of armoured cars backed by mechanised engineering outfits, could enter the country. They had prepared air-fields in southern Bulgaria and massed mechanised troops on the South Serbian frontier.

On the word "Go" they delivered one of the most terrible dive bombing attacks that has ever been known in the history of the world on the unprotected town of Belgrade. At least 26,000 men, women and children were killed and the whole centre of the city was turned into a shambles. They admit that the object of this attack was to terrorise the civil population.

Dive bombers also blasted the way through the mountain passes from Bulgaria into the vital Vardar Valley. The Yugoslav artillery tried to hold them back, but their guns were blown to bits from the air and the armoured columns swept swiftly into the valley, cutting off the Yugoslavs' only line of communications with Greece and with their allies.

Yugoslav resistance was magnificent and is still being maintained in the remote forests and mountains of their rugged land. But as has been proved time and time again in this war men cannot fight against modern machines and courage is without avail unless it has the right tools.

Had Yugoslavia been prepared for war instead of for appeasement, had she had only a few hundred modern aeroplanes to oppose the dive bombers, only a few thousand anti tank guns to hold up the mechanised columns, just a few modern heavy tanks to block the way along her narrow valleys and in her mountain passes, the results might have been different. Alas, we could not spare the material nor get it there in time!

But by her gallant stand against a formidable foe Yugoslavia has earned her place among the small band of brave peoples which have had the courage to fight against aggression. The day of resurrection will come and on that day we must see to it that their sacrifices shall not go unrewarded.



# THE WEALTH OF YUGOSLAVIA

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## CHAPTER TEN

### THE WEALTH OF YUGOSLAVIA

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FROM an economic point of view the history of Yugoslavia, since its creation, has been one of slow progress from dire poverty to comparative prosperity.

When the Serbs re-entered their country after the three years' occupation they found it completely stripped of everything of value. For three years unscrupulous enemies had lived on the land. Then during their retirement they had taken away with them everything of value which they could carry. Not only were there no cattle, sheep or pigs, no stocks of foodstuffs, no money or goods, but the roads and railways had been systematically destroyed, every bridge blown up, every viaduct destroyed.

The ex-Hapsburg provinces were in little better plight. They had not, it is true, been looted and pillaged, but four years of the British blockade had left them almost without food stocks and short of all the raw materials needed for industry and commerce.

America and the Allies sent in a certain amount of food and clothing and a few small loans were granted at high rates of interest in succeeding years, but it

must be said that Yugoslav prosperity was built in the main on the basis of the labour and enterprise of the Serb, Croat and Slovene people themselves.

Yugoslavia is essentially a peasant land, a land of small proprietors. Over eighty five per cent of the people live on or by the land. In Serbia there were no big landlords. Each peasant had his own piece of land, each village its common grazing land and forest. The Slav element in nearly every one of the other provinces of the country had been the land workers and the big estates had usually been owned by wealthy landlords of foreign race, Hungarian, Austrian, or Turkish. After the liberation therefore the Serbs hastened to give economic liberty to their brothers in the new provinces. Big landlords were allowed to keep only a part of their estates. The remainder was taken by the State in exchange for bonds and was shared out among the peasants who had worked it formerly and a certain number of volunteers who had served in the Yugoslav force on the Salonika front, war wounded, and peasants from other districts who had no land or insufficient land. This led to a terrific outcry from the foreign landlords, but gave a sound basis for the future economic development of the State.

Of Yugoslavia's total exports in a normal year nearly sixty per cent are agricultural produce, fifteen per cent timber, ten per cent minerals and fifteen per cent industrial products. The chief agricultural

products exported are : wheat, maize, eggs, bacon, livestock, meat and meat-products, hops, tobacco, grapes and other fruit, dried fruit, especially prunes, hemp, flax and other industrial plants, and recently, at German request, soya beans. Forests cover some thirty per cent of the total area of the country. Many of them are difficult of access and need much capital for their proper exploitation. Slavonian oak is famous throughout Central Europe and in the Bosnian forests many fine and rare types of wood are to be found. Throughout Croatia and parts of Slovenia there are magnificent beech forests. Much good timber is allowed to rot where it stands owing to the lack of transport facilities, much of it is sold locally for fuel. The State is taking an interest now in reafforestation and in the better organisation of the State forests, which are very extensive. Attempts have been made in Croatia, with the aid of foreign capital, to develop a number of industries based on the supply of plentiful cheap wood. Artificial silk is being produced among other wood products.

The mineral wealth of Yugoslavia is very great, and is at present only at the beginning of its exploitation. In Roman times very many of the mineral deposits of the Balkan peninsular were exploited, as far as was possible with their primitive apparatus. The examination of these old workings has greatly assisted modern miners in discovering rich deposits of copper, gold, silver, lead, and zinc.

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There are also very considerable beds of soft coal or lignite, but insufficient supplies of hard coal.

One of the most interesting mines in the country is that of Bor, where the copper is mixed with a percentage of gold which is sufficient to pay the total cost of exploitation. The copper is therefore a free gift to the owners—a French firm. It was copper from this mine, which is so rich that the ore is quarried from a great open pit, which was used for the manufacture of the water jugs, pots and pans, and the plates and dishes in general use all over Southern Serbia during the last century. It has been noticed that many of these vessels when worn show lumps and knobs on them. It was recently discovered that these lumps were due to the presence of gold which, being harder than the copper, resists wear longer.

Following up traces of Roman workings in the mountains above Leskovatz modern miners found traces of a primitive crushing plant. They found that the Romans had exploited a rich vein of gold bearing quartz. Houses in the district were found to be built of quartz cut from the mountain side and roads had also been paved with gold bearing quartz. German machinery has now been imported to deal with the quartz.

Some of the streams which flow into the Timok River carry considerable quantities of alluvial gold. The peasants of the district spend their spare time in washing gold and until recently they used the old

classical method of washing the earth over a lamb's fleece. The sand is washed away and the heavy gold is caught in the wool. This is the practice which probably gave rise to the legend of the "golden fleece."

A British and American group was investigating for some years to find the source of this alluvial gold. Up in the mountains above the Timok valley they traced copper ore bodies, similar to those of Bor and bearing a high percentage of gold, of considerable economic importance. It is considered that with the exploitation of this new field mining may become by far the most important industry in Yugoslavia. The Bor Mines and the Trepca Mines are two of the cheapest and most important base metal mines known to exist and the new mine is believed to be of equally great possibilities.

Industry in Yugoslavia has been developed so far mainly in Slovenia and Croatia. It is protected by high tariffs and as a result considerable progress has been made in building up factories for the production of cloth, cotton fabrics, furniture and other objects of wood, leather and leather goods, etc. There are several important boot and shoe manufacturing plants, the biggest owned by the Czech firm of Bata, in the country. But boots and shoes, clothing, and many objects used in the home are produced still by local craftsmen, often excellent workers and not expensive.

Sugar beet is grown in considerable quantities and is manufactured mainly in State factories. Sugar pays a very heavy duty and is very expensive. This limits consumption considerably so that the factories often do not work full time. A quota system has been introduced.

The railways of the country, which are being rapidly extended and are quite efficiently run, are also State-owned and controlled.

A series of good harvests in the last few years, coupled with the enormous demand for raw materials and foodstuffs of the type produced by Yugoslavia, and the consequent rise in prices (all due to the demands of the German and Italian war machine) brought about a period of relative prosperity in Yugoslavia. Belgrade grew in the last twenty years from 70,000 inhabitants to over 300,000, Zagreb more than doubled itself, Ljubljana became a great town, and Skopje became quite unrecognisable to those who had known only the quaint, dirty town of Uskub before the war.

The co-operative system of farming—or at least the co-operative buying of seed, hiring of machines, and selling of produce—is rapidly spreading throughout the country. In Slovenia nearly one hundred per cent of agriculture and all agricultural credit is on a co-operative basis. The societies are controlled largely by the Catholic Church and are very efficiently run.

In Croatia the Croatian Peasant Party has tried also to organise co-operation among its members. Considerable progress has been made. In Serbia the movement made great strides owing to the interest of King Alexander, who gave it very great privileges and even tried to make it the basis of a new nation-wide party to undertake the political reorganisation of the country.

With the improvement of the quality of Yugoslavia's agricultural produce, its standardisation and grading, better packing and the introduction of new types of fruit and stock, the market will be greatly extended and the value of exports will be greatly increased.

Yugoslavia has enormous and as yet practically untouched sources of water-power. In the Slovenian mountains there are many powerful waterfalls and at several places on the Dalmatian coast and in Bosnia there are also great potential sources of power. The greatest of these are the falls of the Rivers Krk and Tzettina in Dalmatia, concessions for the exploitation of which were given to a French company. Part of the power so produced is now utilised in a great aluminium plant which uses the enormous beds of bauxite ore to be found on the Dalmatian coast. There are other rich deposits of bauxite which were formerly sent to Belgium to be converted into aluminium.

Given peace and the supply of a certain amount of

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foreign capital for the rapid improvement of communications and transport throughout the country there is every prospect of it becoming a good market for good class manufactured goods. It is to be hoped that after this war Britain will not neglect this gallant ally and rich potential market, which will otherwise be driven once again to seek economic support in Germany, which must sooner or later result in its being absorbed into the German "Lebensraum."

## APPENDIX ONE

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DR. W. A. MORISON, who has written this appendix, is Lecturer in Comparative Slavonic Philology at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London.

After taking an Honours Degree in Slavonic Languages in London, with Russian as principle language, he went to Prague, where he took his Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, defending his thesis in the Czech tongue.

Later he studied for two years in Belgrade. He spoke Serbian better than any other foreigner in the town and was able to ask unanswerable questions of the most learned professors. No one is better qualified to write on this subject than he.

## APPENDIX ONE

THE SERBO-CROAT LANGUAGE

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IN Yugoslavia, as in many European countries, the language question was rendered complicated by the presence within the boundaries of the state of minorities of alien speech. These minorities (Germans, Hungarians, Albanians, etc.) numbered some 2,000,000, or thirteen per cent of the population. Thanks to a constant stream of propaganda, always skilful and sometimes unscrupulous, world public opinion was rarely allowed to forget the existence of these minorities, with their often justified claims and complaints. What was not so generally realised was that of the total population of 15,000,000, nearly 12,000,000 or eighty per cent of the whole, spoke not many different languages, but one, Serbo-Croat, and that the 1,000,000 Slovenes spoke a language differing little more from Serbo-Croat than broad Scots does from Southern English; further, that a great many speakers of Serbo-Croat and Slovene themselves formed minority groups in other countries.

It would appear that the use of the local terms Serb, Croat, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Dalmatian and

so forth has given rise, in circles unacquainted with the true facts, to the erroneous belief that, quite apart from the German, Hungarian and other minorities, the population of Yugoslavia consisted of a medley of distinct races, Serbs Croats and what not, each with its own separate language. One is sometimes tempted to suspect that interested parties have taken advantage of the foreigner's excusable linguistic ignorance to inculcate this view, otherwise it is difficult to understand, for instance, why one distinguished visitor to Yugoslavia could not be shaken in her belief that there was a Bosnian language. The fact remains that however much Serbs Croats, Bosniacs, Montenegrins may differ in religion, culture traditions or aspirations they all speak one language—Serbo-Croat—a language which despite its double barrelled name is as uniform, as one as English or French, and far more uniform than for instance, the often mutually unintelligible dialects known collectively as German.

Serbo-Croat with Slovene and Bulgarian (which is itself so similar to Serbo-Croat that speakers of the two languages have little difficulty in understanding one another) form the southern branch of the great Slavonic family of languages spoken by some 200 millions of people. Slavonic is itself a descendent of the Indo-European parent from which sprang all the languages of Europe except Hungarian, Finnish and allied tongues Basque and Turkish, it is thus

related to Celtic (Welsh, Gaelic, etc.), Germanic (English, German, Swedish, etc.), Latin (and thus Spanish, French, etc.), Greek, Albanian, Lithuanian and Latvian, and outside Europe to Armenian, Persian and many of the languages of India, including the ancient Sanskrit. The kinship of Serbo-Croat with these languages may easily be demonstrated by similarities of vocabulary and grammatical construction; here are a few examples:

(i) NUMERALS—English *two*, Latin *duo*, Greek *δύο*, Serbo-Croat *dva*; English *three*, Latin *tres*, Greek *τρεις*, Serbo-Croat *tri*; English *seven*. Latin *septem*, Greek *hepta*, Serbo-Croat *sedam*;

(ii) VERB-ENDINGS—First person singular: English *-am*, Latin *su-m*, Greek *-mi*, Serbo-Croat *-m*; Second person singular: Latin *-s*, Serbo-Croat *-š*; First person plural: Latin *-mus*, Greek *-men*, Serbo-Croat *-mo*; Second person plural: Latin *-tis*, Greek *-te*, Serbo-Croat *-te*;

(iii) VOCABULARY—English *mother*, Latin *mater*, Serbo-Croat *mati*; English *brother*, Latin *frater*, Serbo-Croat *brat*; English *sister*, Serbo-Croat *sestra*; English *queen*, *quean*, Greek *γυνή*, Serbo-Croat *žena* (women, from a form *guena*); English *good*, Serbo-Croat *god-an* (suitable); English *small*, Serbo-Croat *mali*; English *to be*, Serbo-Croat *bi-ti*; Latin *da-re* (to give), Serbo-Croat *da-ti*; English *to love*, Serbo-Croat *ljubi-ti*; English *may*, German *mag*, Serbo-Croat *mogu* (I can); Latin *ne* (not), Serbo-Croat *ne*.

The South Slav languages are now divided from their relatives in Central Europe (Polish, Czech and Slovak) and Eastero Europe (Russian, White Russian and Ukrainian) by a belt of non Slav speech (German, Hungarian and Roumanian), but after centuries of separate existence the similarity between all these languages is still striking. Apart from details of pronunciation the chief differences are presented by the form of abstract words like *liberty, independent, concentrate, consider, separate, identify, excellent*, and so on, often created independently in the various countries and on different foreign models (Latin, Greek German etc.). As regards the vocabulary of everyday life, it may be said that more or less the same words are used for *water, father, winter, cow, milk, good, big, little, green, gnat, bat, read, see*, and hundreds more over a vast territory stretching with certain interruptions from Poznan in Poland to Vladivostok in Eastern Siberia and from Archangel in North Russia to Burgas on the Black Sea and Kotor on the Adriatic.

Serbo-Croat is often considered the most melodious of the Slavonic languages. This is partly due to the fact that it has avoided the agglomerations of consonants that are so striking a feature of some other Slavonic languages—compare for instance, Serbo-Croat *danas* (to-day) with Czech and Bulgarian *dnes*, Serbo-Croat *isk* (wolf) with Czech *vlk*, partly because it is one of the languages (rare in Europe,

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Slovene is another) having what is known as a "musical" accent, i.e. in which part of the pronunciation of each word is a definite intonation, a rise or fall of the voice. Whereas in a language like English the intonation of each word varies with the intention of the speaker (compare the various intonations of Yes, Yes !, Yes ?), in Serbo-Croat the word for "hand" is always, as it were, *raka?*, the word-intonation being interwoven with the intonation of the sentence (questioning, doubting, asserting, etc.) to form a fascinating melody-pattern.

Like all the Slavonic languages except Bulgarian, Serbo-Croat is highly inflected, that is to say, the relationship between the various nouns, etc., in the sentence is largely expressed not by prepositions and word-position as in English or French, but by changes in the end of the words as in Latin and Greek. For example, "*engleski* oficir" means "the English officer," "*engleskog* oficira"—"*of* the English officer," "*engleskom* oficira"—"*to* the English officer." The number of endings has been reduced somewhat as compared with Czech or Russian, but unlike Russian Serbo-Croat has retained the special form of the Vocative, so that the author of this book would be referred to as *Gospodin Harrison* (Mr. Harrison) but addressed as *Gospodine Harrisone* (O Mr. Harrison; cf. Latin *bone domine*).

The most important foreign contributor to the vocabulary of Serbo-Croat has for obvious historical

reasons been Turkish, from which there have passed into the language a great many native Turkish and also Arabic and Persian words. The result is that it is possible to hear in the streets of Belgrade words almost identical with forms used as far to the East as Persia and India (owing to the Moorish Conquest), as far to the West as Spain and the Spanish speaking parts of America. These words, against which there has never been any marked Purist reaction, lend the language an agreeable touch of Oriental colour.

As spoken by the peasants, Serbo-Croat falls into three main dialects, which, to avoid the use of technical terms, may be designated *A*, *B* and *C*. Roughly speaking, dialect *A* is spoken in Zagreb and the surrounding parts of Croatia, having as its Western neighbour Slovene, to which it presents many similarities, dialect *B* is used in a small area on the coast near Fiume and on the islands along the Dalmatian coast, and dialect *C* is the language of most of the rest of the country, including Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Montenegro. There are also minor dialects forming the transition to Bulgarian, and in fact often claimed (possibly with justice) as dialects of that language.

These three dialects are very similar, and occasion no difficulty in intercommunication, they differ perhaps less than extreme dialects of English. Their closeness is further shown by the fact that each of the three presents in different parts of its area a

threefold development of the Slavonic vowel conventionally indicated by ē; namely (i) *e*, (ii) *i*, (iii) *ije* (pronounced roughly like the *ee-e* in "three eggs") or, under certain conditions, *je* (like the *ye* in "yes"). For instance, the Slavonic words *bělo* (white), *věra* (faith) appear in the *e*-dialects as *belo*, *vera*, in the *i*-dialects as *bilo*, *vira* and in the *ije*-dialects as *bijelo*, *vjera*. There are further mixed forms, i.e. words of the *i*-type in *e*-dialects, and so on.

Dialects *A* and *C*, but not the more archaic *B* of the islands also share the curious shifting of the accent one syllable towards the beginning of the word from its original position as deduced from Russian and Bulgarian. Thus the word for "hand," in Russian *ruká*, Bulgarian *rǔká*, dialect *B* of Serbo-Croat *ruká* (i.e. stressed on the last syllable) is in dialects *A* and *C* *rúka*, with the stress on the first syllable. The result is that in these dialects no word of more than one syllable can be stressed on the end, and this also operates in words borrowed from abroad, whence the pronunciations *restóran*, *advókat*, *oficir*, and so on.

In so far as the Croats may be said to speak dialects *A* and *B*, and the Serbs dialect *C* (though the distinction is not really so hard and fast, and, for instance, many Croats speak dialect *C*), Serbs and Croats are thus separated linguistically by a quite inconsiderable difference of dialect. But this does not give a complete picture of the situation. At the

beginning of the nineteenth century, when the need was felt for a common literary language, the *je* type of Dialect C (roughly speaking the language of Bosnia Hertzegovina and Montenegro) was chosen, not without reason, as representing the most beautiful form of Serbo-Croat speech, and it still remains the literary language of Croatia, the language of school, university and educated speech. The Serbs in Serbia (though not those in Bosnia, Hertzegovina and Montenegro) subsequently, and perhaps regrettably, adopted for literary and official use the *e* type of the same dialect spoken in their part of the Serbo-Croat area. Even so the difference between literary Croat and literary (Belgrade) Serb is fundamentally nothing more than that between subdivisions of one and the same dialect.

It must however be added that the Serbs use the Cyrillic (Russian) alphabet and Croats the Latin, and that there are certain minor differences of vocabulary and construction. Among other things, the Serbs show a greater propensity to use foreign words—*detašman* (detachment) *angazman* (engagement) *defekt manjar* *manuskript*, *fabrika* (factory), *januar*, *februar* etc.—the Croats in many cases preferring forms compounded from native roots and suffixes.

APPENDIX TWO

FOOD IN YUGOSLAVIA

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## APPENDIX TWO

### FOOD IN YUGOSLAVIA

By MARJORIE WATSON HARRISON

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RED and white are the kitchens of the towns. White walls, white floors, white doors and white cupboards and tables and stools ; white sinks and plates and bowls, a big flat-topped stove set in gleaming white tiles and red and white cooking pans of every conceivable shape and size, tall and narrow, flat and squat, red outside and white inside with two little handles like saucy ears. For every dish there's a special shape and size that is the best and every kitchen has it.

The red and white colour scheme is emphasised by the pans of milk and cream, the velvety white cheese of goats' milk, the dishes of sour milk and the soft red of tomatoes and paprika piled on the tables or peeping from the gigantic market basket. Even in winter the colour is there in the neatly stacked bottles of tomato *purée* and the strings of dried red peppers hanging from the ceiling.

But red and white unrelieved would be monotonous. There are the burnished hand-beaten copper pre-

serving pans hanging from nails in the wall and reflecting the busy kitchen scene. In the cupboards are the tins for baking the rich layer cakes and the green peasant made earthenware dishes which are essential for the cooking of some foods. There's the fresh green of salads repeating the green of the tree shading the open kitchen window, the warm cream of freshly split wood piled in the wood basket beside the stove, the golden crust and white crumb of freshly baked rolls and bread. And there's that rich mingled aroma of food and wine and spices that speaks of the artist at work.

'There indeed was a paradise for the gourmand and the adventurous cook.'

First there was the early morning visit to the market with the capacious baskets and the tattered but cheerful gamin of an Albanian boy with his little skull cap of white goat's hair and low seated tight legged trousers, and laced hide sandals. Sometimes he would be sitting on the steps waiting to carry the empty baskets to the market. Sometimes he would materialise in the narrow alleys and seize the baskets from behind with a mischievous grin and a cheerful apology.

Then the daily rounds would begin. The visit to the butcher for the pale veal cut into slices for Wiener Schnitzel, or the fricandeau, the great hunks of beef which would roast in the English way if hung for eight days after buying, the juicy chunks for goulash,

the lamb or mutton or pork, tiny chops perhaps or a whole young lamb in the springtime or a sucking pig for Christmas. Or perhaps we would visit a peasant's stall to buy a turkey, goose, duck or chickens. If we long for a dish of chicken's livers we can buy them for a penny each, or we may buy chicken breasts at twopence each.

If we need fish we go to the fish stalls, and watching the fish swimming in huge glass tanks. We choose a lively specimen which the fishmonger catches with his net, an ugly black brute of a fish with a broad flat head, or a queer fish with a spiked snout, all shapes and sizes of river fish. Perhaps we long for sea fish, succulent oysters, lobsters or the many varieties of excellent fish caught in the waters of the Adriatic. All these can be bought, for they are brought fresh each day by aeroplane from the coast, but they are luxuries. A dozen oysters will cost one and six-pence and for that sum we can buy a chicken or three pounds of beef.

Everything is there in its season and we scorn the foods that are out of season. In the springtime there are fresh green salads, lettuce, chicory, "bird's salad," radishes, young onions, followed by cucumbers and tomatoes and green and red paprikas. We buy wisely and at the height of their season lettuces may be ten a penny, cucumbers a halfpenny each, tomatoes a halfpenny a pound. Eggs may cost ten-pence a score, and how the housewife grumbles if

they cost as much as a penny each at Christmas time

The fruit ripens quickly in the warm sunshine, cherries, strawberries big and succulent or small and scented from the woods, raspberries, peaches, apricots, plums, apples, pears, quinces, melons of all sizes from the tiny green fleshed aromatic pine apple melons to the glistening huge water melons with their cool pink flesh and jet black seeds. Grapes, tiny and green, for a penny a pound, or big black scented ones that cost as much as fourpence a pound. The pointed rose-tinted grapes can be bought until Christmas time, but then there are only nuts, prunes, figs, sultanas and the juicy oranges and lemons, which are among the few imported foodstuffs.

There are vegetables in the same profusion, peas and beans, young tiny marrows and cucumbers for stuffing celeriac and salsify, cabbages with firm white hearts minute sprouts, carrots, turnips, parsnips, purple egg plants *kohl rabi* (*green young and raw*), mushrooms and fungi in a terrifying range of colours, young green corn, asparagus all appear in their season, not forced in glass houses, but grown in rich earth and ripened in the kindly sunshine, picked at their prime and brought to the towns from the villages in oxen carts without being stalled by train journeys and wholesalers' stores.

The winter kitchens of the country resemble those of the town, but in the garden there is a big brick oven

where the bread is baked. Often there is a roof of boughs supported by saplings and under its shade the stove and kitchen equipment is carried out for the summer to keep the house cool.

Here the nations meet and mingle as the rivers meet beneath the bluff where stands the Turkish fortress—and they have brought with them the best dishes of their countries which have been absorbed and adapted to form a national cookery as varied and exciting as the cookery of any country in the world.

It is impossible to describe all the dishes—a whole volume would be needed, but here are a few examples.

Chicken soup—a great tureen of it with neat joints of succulent chicken in a soup which has been rendered memorable by the addition of a glass of thick cream and the juice of lemons.

The Eastern influence is found in the “Sarma,” young vine leaves used as parcel wrapping for a mixture of minced mutton, rice and onion which has been fried in olive oil. The tiny parcels are sautéed and finally cooked slowly in thick tomato and paprika sauce. Cabbage leaves are sometimes used in the same way, either sauerkraut or fresh leaves which have been steeped for a few minutes in boiling water to make them supple. Green peppers, tiny marrows, short cucumbers, and tomatoes are also stuffed and cooked in their season.

Young lambs, pigs and chickens are speared on a spit and cooked over a fire of fragrant vine branches

or charcoal All afternoon a man sits patiently turning the spits and in the evening, dining under the stars, two chefs will come round bearing the speared chickens shoulder high, and the diner may make his choice

Crisp salads accompany the baked meats, tomato, cucumber, lettuce or green paprika, all dressed with an abundance of the local olive oil and pink wine vinegar In winter there are salads of beans cooked in olive oil and water and then mixed with chopped garlic or onion, "ajvar" made from a purée of egg plants, beetroots baked not boiled, celeriac, cooked and cut into slices or shredded raw and dressed with cream, potato salad with onion and thick mayonnaise, and salads of white and red cabbage

Moussaka is another dish which savours of the east An earthenware dish is filled with alternative layers of minced mutton and slices of potato or egg plant which have been dipped in batter and lightly fried Over this is poured a batter of eggs and sour cream and the whole is baked slowly for some hours

Goulash, in which the chief ingredients are beef and paprika is half soup half stew It is eaten with a form of macaroni freshly made with eggs and flour Here again the influence of a near neighbour can be seen

Rich layer cakes or "torte" are usually prepared when guests are expected For a torte plenty of butter,

about half a pound, ten or twelve eggs, sugar, ground almonds or walnuts or chocolate and perhaps a little flour are the usual ingredients. The fillings again call for eggs and butter in plenty. Never in any country have I seen such a fascinating variety of small cakes, no bigger than a lollipop, than that which the Yugoslav housewife can produce. These are handed round as we would hand round sweets and chocolates.

Pancakes, too, are a national dish, small ones which melt in the mouth, made with more eggs than is usual in England and often with the addition of a little melted butter to the batter. The filling may be sweet or savoury, jam, nuts or curd cheese are the most popular.

The most interesting pastry from the foreigner's point of view is a form of flaky pastry. Flour and water are mixed to a dough and kneaded well. Then the dough is placed on a clean tablecloth on a large kitchen table in the centre of the room. The dough is gently stretched in all directions until it is as thin as tissue paper. Several layers are placed in a baking tin, each layer sprinkled with olive oil, then a thick layer of filling is added, minced meat, egg and spinach, curd cheese and spiced apples are some of the fillings in general use. Finally, several more layers of besprinkled pastry fill the dish and the whole is baked until the pastry is a golden brown outside and melting in the centre. Sometimes the filling is placed on the

waferslike sheet of dough which is then rolled up, roly poly fashion, baked and cut in slices

There's a delightful inconsequence about the menu here. Cheese may crop up at unusual times in the meal, fruits in syrup may be served with chicken or as a sweet. When the syrup is thicker a spoonful of the fruit is taken at each ceremonial visit. At first the meals may seem a trifle heavy to the uninitiated when faced with course after course of rich meats followed by even richer sweets, but soon a keen appreciation will ensue.

Whatever form the meal may have taken the end is always the same. Small cups of coffee which are always served in the tradition of "strong as a lion, hot as hell, and sweet as love," with a froth covering the top. Coffee is drunk from the early hours of the morning till late at night.

The prodigality of summer and autumn is not wasted here. Every housewife rises early before the sun is hot and the store cupboard bears witness to her industry. Row upon row of "slatko," the delicious syrupy jam with the fruits preserved whole in it. Bottles of fruit in syrup, pickled gherkins, dried and pickled pepper, bottles of thick tomato purée, the making of which would fill a chapter in itself, all these will bring variety to the table in winter. Dried smoked meats are cut into thin slices and eaten with plum brandy. The sun-dried ham of Dalmatia is a famous delicacy, as is also the dried Ohrid trout, so

delicious flaked on sandwiches. No one has fully appreciated a sausage who has not tried one in which a little smoked goose breast has been mixed with the pork.

Here haricot beans are plentiful and cheap and a delicious pot of baked beans and tomato has become a joke, because it is a sure sign that the housekeeping funds are running low.

We cannot leave the gastronomical scene without a glance at the street corner vendors whose stock in trade changes with the seasons, boiled corn cobs, baked corn cobs, caramelised fruits speared on orange sticks, fruit syrups, bars of nut toffee, roast chestnuts, popcorn balls. Most of these small boys have no licence to trade, and often they are to be seen dashing from one side of the street to the other to escape an approaching gendarme, who will leave them unmolested if they can reach the no man's land of the other pavement which is off his beat.

What of the national drinks? The old fashioned people begin the day with a glass of plum brandy, a cup of black coffee, and a spoonful of jam. But foreign influence shows itself in white coffee and rolls which are now seen in most households.

At mid-day the aperitif is variations of spirits distilled from fruits, plum brandy predominating, and there is an infinite variety of wines to accompany the good food, white and red, light and heavy, sweet as sugar or so acid that the mouth shrinks.

## APPENDIX TWO

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What visions of happy hours with good friends, good food, good wines! Can we ever hope that these days will return and that in these war scarred lands we shall once again gather round the friendly board and hear that stimulating exchange of ideas which was an inseparable part of the enjoyment of the delicious foods and wines?